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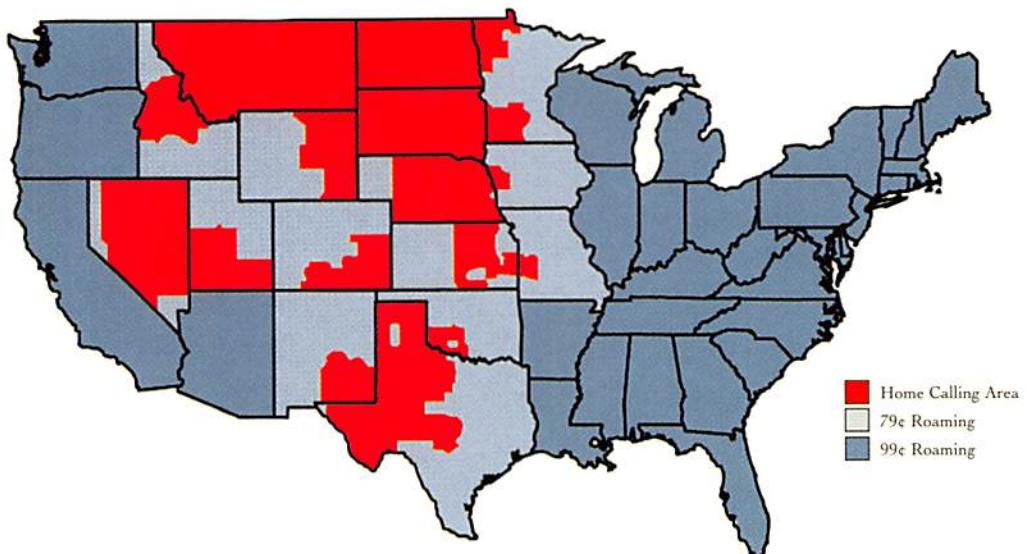
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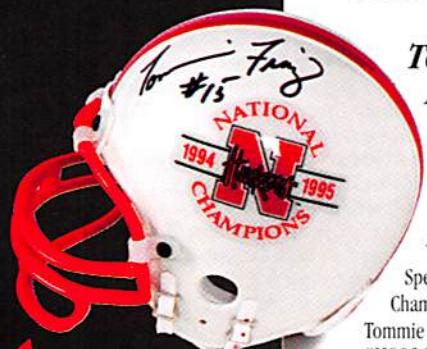
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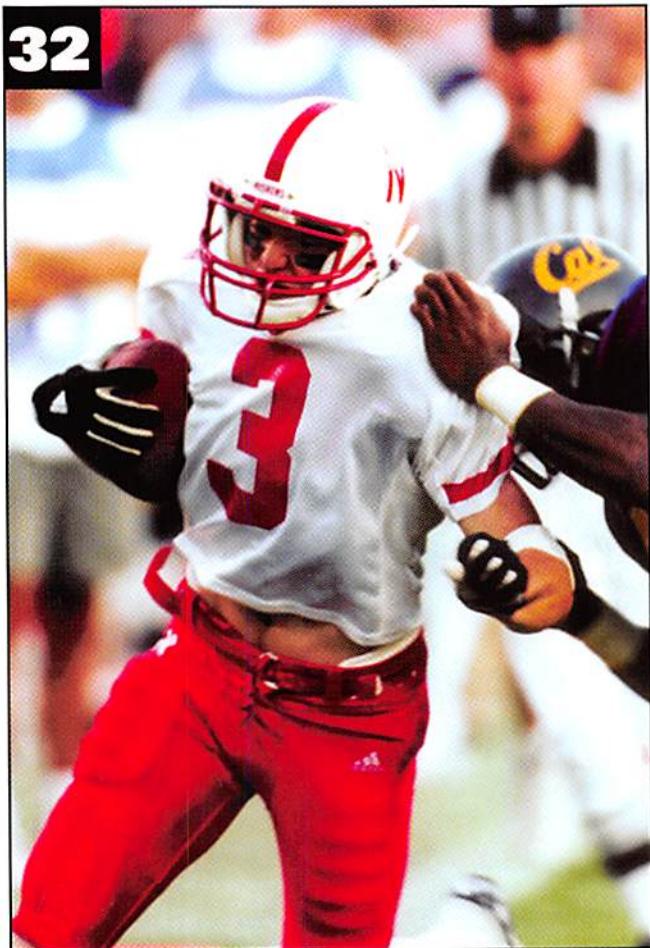
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Huskers Illustrated

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Matt Davison's collegiate career, which is less than two years old, has been defined and enshrined by one reception.

By Mike Babcock

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Megan Korver doesn't look any different than she did last year. But talent wise, she's gone from Big 12 snub to All-America candidate.

By Todd Henrichs

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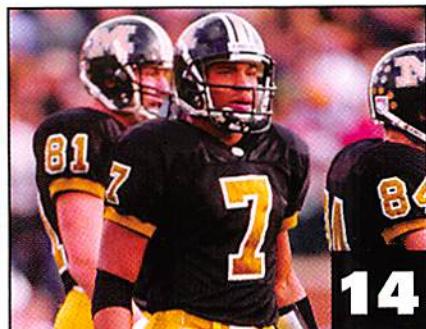
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pass The Ball

Having watched the Nebraska-Oklahoma St. game in person and the Nebraska-Texas A&M game on television, I have drawn one conclusion: Throw the ball. Nebraska's running game has been lethargic. Defenses are being prepared to stop the run. Let's start throwing the ball more to open up the run game. I can't remember the last time the Huskers averaged less than 200 rushing yards per game. I am not saying air it out all the time, but when the running game is not there, you have to go to the pass. It will create more opportunities on the ground. Look what happened when Nebraska started to throw the ball more in the third quarter of the OSU game and the fourth quarter of the A&M game. We scored 28 points. We still have half the season left, so let's make a statement.

Kevin E. Oneth
via e-mail

Frank, Colby, Etc.

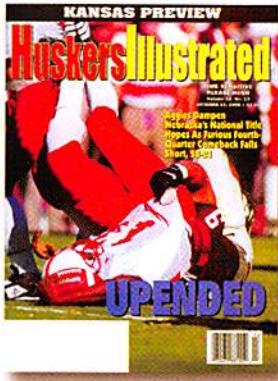
After watching the Huskers lose to Texas A&M today, I'm sure you will be receiving a large number of letters asking for Frank Solich's head. I, for one, will stand by Frank and his play-calling. I am sure that those who question Coach Solich's play-calling have not coached football for over 25 years, nor are they at every practice. So let's let Solich do his job and give him support like true Husker fans.

Also, I would like to comment on your Prep Report column profiling Colby Freeman. Why don't you profile an athlete who is actually going to play for the Huskers and is already committed to Nebraska, like Josh Davis or Judd Davies, instead of a kid who doesn't know where he is going to play? I couldn't care less what Colby Freeman did on Friday night, what college games he watched on television or whether he thinks his dad is a good coach. Let Freeman go to Texas A&M, and give some ink to the young men we will be watching in the future.

Kirby Eisenhauer
Wibaux, Mont.

Topped In Texas

What's going on with the Huskers? I know they have a new coach, but the



players and the system are essentially the same. They just don't look very dominating, or at times, very good. Their offense looked positively inept against Oklahoma St. and Texas A&M. They

combined for just over 200 yards rushing in those two games. They should be getting that much in a half. They also allowed a defensive touchdown, which proved to be the difference in the game. The coaches and players knew they would have to lean on the defense to carry the team for a week or two while the offense came together, but this is ridiculous. If this happened in the first week or two, it would be some-

what understandable. In the fifth and sixth games of the season, this should not be happening. The defense, particularly the defensive backs, needs to play better, as well. They allowed another long touchdown pass and did not come up to support the front seven on the long run that set up another touchdown. We still have an outside shot at the national title with one loss, but we will have to pick it up on offense to have any chance at all.

Geoffrey Wilmington
Kansas City, Mo.

Colby's A Keeper

I'm really upset to hear people saying such negative things about Colby Freeman ("Letters," Oct. 17). He seems to be a wonderful young man. There are hundreds of athletes across the country in his position right now, and they are all under the same pressure. They have dozens of college coaches trying to convince these kids to go to this college or that one. They are trying to play with their high school teams, have fun being kids and prepare to start being adults. I don't know personally, but I'm sure this is an immense pressure for 17-year-olds to bear. Thank you, Mr. Freeman, for taking time out of your life to tell us about the experiences of a prep star.

Caroline Fiesther
Lincoln, Neb.

Got Something To Say?

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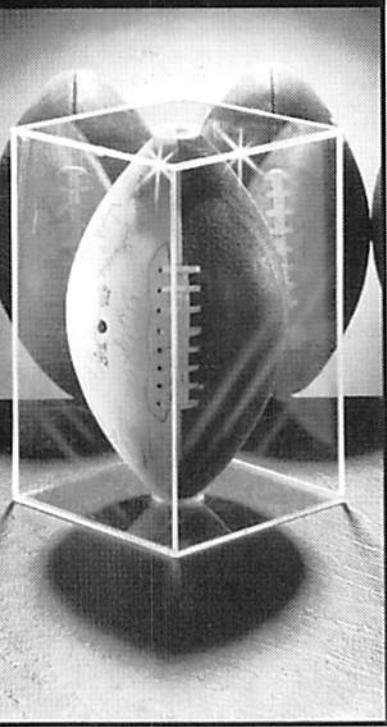
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BIG 12 NEWS

Notes And Quotes From Around The League

BETTER CHECK THE VCR

You have to wonder what Oklahoma State-Nebraska game Texas A&M coach R.C. Slocum watched as he prepared for the No. 18 Aggies' meeting with the No. 2 Cornhuskers.

Slocum viewed what he said was a videotape of Nebraska's 24-17 win over OSU at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo., and concluded that, "Oklahoma State, from what I saw, didn't do anything revolutionary on defense." What? They didn't? Judging from the radical difference between Slocum's comments and those of the Cornhuskers and Cowboys there seems to be only one explanation: In the game-film exchange, Nebraska sent Slocum a tape of their last meeting with OSU in 1995, a 64-21 Husker victory.

"We prepared for seven different defenses last week," Nebraska center Josh Heskew said after the OSU game. "And on the first play, I looked up and said, 'What the heck is this defense?' I had never seen it before in the five years that I've been here, and it was a scheme that worked."

It certainly did. OSU held Nebraska to just 4 yards rushing the first half and 73 for the game. NU's 215 yards in total offense was its worst performance in 22 seasons.

OSU defensive coordinator Rob Ryan revealed that the Cowboys had taken advantage of an open week to install a new scheme. After the game, Ryan said: "You gotta go back to the 1940s to look at TCU film, if they had film back then, to find (the scheme)."

"It still works. And we're going to shut down everybody's running game. That's our philosophy."



Has John Blake been so disappointing in his stint as head coach that Oklahoma fans might actually be wishing Howard Schnellenberger was still around?

SHORT SHOTS

The record doesn't show it, but Kansas coach Terry Allen is convinced the Jayhawks have made strides in his second season. "We're obviously a better offensive football team, but I don't know if we're quite as good defensively," Allen said before KU's game at Baylor. "On the whole, it's disappointing when you take a look and we're 2-3 and a year ago we were 4-1 at this time. But I'm still convinced that we're a better football team. How much better? That remains to be seen."

Missouri gave Nebraska a scare last year similar to what OSU did this season. Tigers' coach Larry Smith said he wasn't surprised that the close calls had a negative effect in the polls on Nebraska and the two teams that almost beat the Huskers. "If a game is close or they don't score a lot of points, then they are penalized for it," Smith said of Nebraska losing votes in the polls. "Let's face it, the polls are still a name game, but there is a very fine line between winning and losing in college football these days. I don't care what your name is, you've got to play from week to week."

Speaking of the polls, Texas Tech coach Spike Dykes refused to get upset when his Red Raiders weren't ranked after moving to 5-0 with a 31-29 win over Baylor. "We're used to it," Dykes said of the pollsters' snub. "I guess part of the reason is that we were picked so low (in the preseason), but that doesn't bother us."

Baylor coach Dave Roberts planned to move Jermaine Alfred ahead of Odell James at quarterback after Alfred came off the bench in the fourth quarter to lead four touchdown drives against Tech. But don't tell Roberts he has a budding quarterback controversy on his hands. "We're just trying to get a first down," said Roberts, chuckling. "If we do that, we'll let (the starter) play the next series."

First-year Texas coach Mack Brown remembers the intensity of the OU-Texas rivalry from the one season (1984) that he worked as the Sooners' offensive coordinator. That's why Brown is amused when he hears people say the series has lost its luster because both teams are struggling. "I don't think it's lost any of its luster," Brown said.

"Obviously, there'd be more national importance if we were ranked No. 1 and No. 2. Both of us are trying to get back up where we used to be when it was No. 1 against No. 2. So that may mean that (this year's game) is even more important now than it used to be."

Denver Post columnist Jim Armstrong wrote it: "John Blake has been a disaster as the head coach at Oklahoma, but he is about to accomplish something no other OU coach ever has. He's going to make the alums wish they still had Howard Schnellenberger around." ■ — **Dave Sittler**

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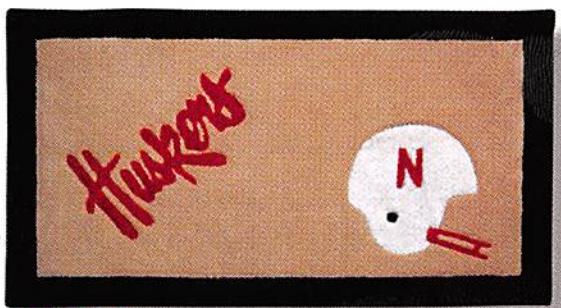
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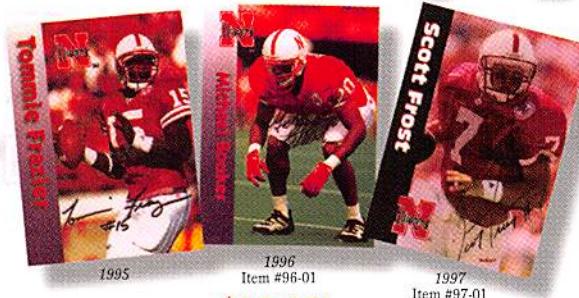
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Missouri Men?

Allegiances are questioned as the Huskers prepare for the rematch

Steve Warren and Mike Rucker are defending themselves even now, one season later.

"The Missouri game last year, I get a lot of stuff about that," Warren said recently. "I still do. They take that as a victory. They really do. It's kind of like they won the national championship."

"There are still a little bitter feelings. But it's good-natured between me and my friends."

"My friends went to Missouri, so every time I see them, they're always talking: 'Well, this year we're going to beat you guys.' "

Mike Rucker

The basis of the bitter feelings and the good-natured ribbing, of course, is Nebraska's dramatic, 45-38 overtime victory against Missouri last season at Columbia.

His friends "always say Missouri won the game," Rucker said.

"They say it was an illegal play."

It was the Cornhuskers' tying touchdown on the final play of regulation, when freshman split end Matt Davison caught a Scott Frost pass that was deflected by wingback

Shevin Wiggins.

The ball was kicked by Wiggins. If intentional, such kicking is illegal.

Rucker has a standard response to complaints about that. "I tell them holding goes on every play, and that isn't called," he said. "If they (the officials) don't call it, then it's not illegal."

Rucker smiles. The ribbing he takes also is good-natured.

"My best friend and his family all went to Missouri," the senior rush end said. "And we've got a lot of Missouri fans in St. Joe. So they cheer for me, but they want Missouri to win."

Rucker and Warren are both from Missouri, Rucker from St. Joseph, Warren from Springfield.

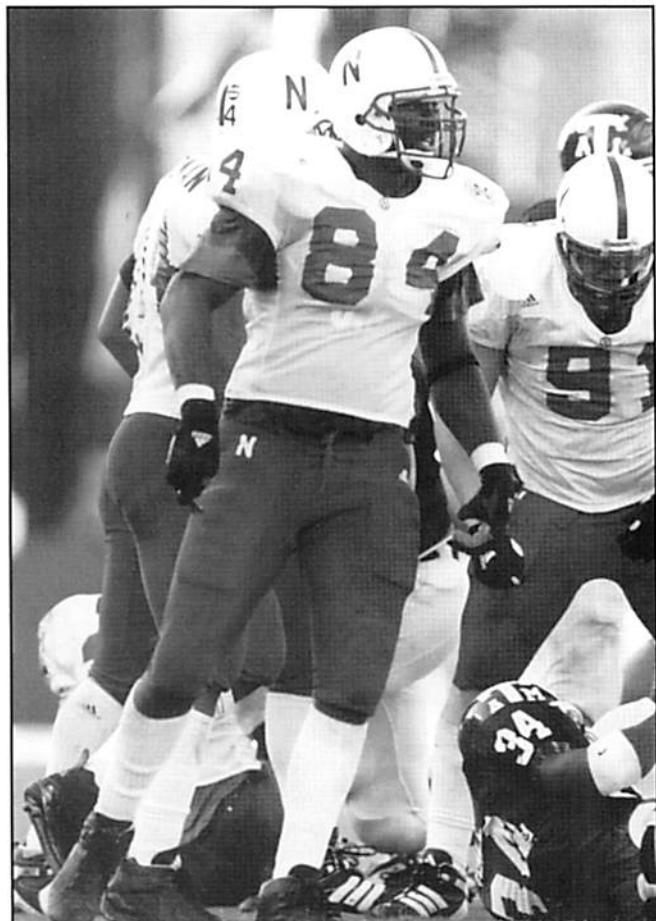
"My friends went to Missouri, so every time I see them, they're always talking: 'Well, this year we're going to beat you guys,'" he said. "We talk about it. We joke around and everything."

"If we lose, I'll probably never, ever go home because I would never hear the end of it. I've heard enough about that game (last season). I can't imagine what it would be like if they won."

Among his friends from Springfield is Kevin Tucker, a sophomore tailback for the Tigers.

Missouri, which once held its own against Nebraska, hasn't won in a series that dates to 1892 since 1978, when coach Warren Powers' Tigers

Bob Beauvais



While it's a heated rivalry, Missouri natives and Nebraska standouts, Rucker (above) and Warren, don't have any animosity toward the Tigers.

"I always wanted to go to Missouri," said Rucker.

But Missouri didn't take an interest in him until near the end of his senior year in high school because of the coaching change that brought Smith to Columbia, while "Nebraska was right there from the beginning," he said. "Missouri really didn't show the same professionalism."

Warren never seriously considered Missouri. Even so, "I probably get a little more motivated playing

Missouri . . . well, I wouldn't say more motivated. I just look at it differently because it's my home state. So I take a little bit more pride in the game. I have to go home afterward.

"I'm not going to be in Nebraska the rest of my life."

Despite Smith's recruiting efforts, the Cornhuskers already have an oral commitment from another Missouri athlete — **Spencer Owen**, a 6-foot-5, 235-pound rush end from Carrollton.

Owen, whose mom is a Missouri graduate, told the *Lincoln Journal Star* recently: "People keep asking if I chose Nebraska because **Mike Rucker** and **Grant Wistrom** played there and they are from Missouri. I never thought about that. But those are two of the best (rush ends) ever."

This year's Cornhusker team also includes sophomore I-back **Dan Alexander** from Wentzville and red-shirt freshman tight end **Tracey Wistrom**, Grant's brother, from Webb City.

The ribbing isn't really that big of a deal, according to Warren, who takes it all in stride. "When I talk to my friends back home in Missouri, we don't talk much about football," he said. ■

Random QUOTES

"I think our linemen are growing every game in terms of confidence in themselves, in their teammates and (in) what they're doing."

— **Frank Solich**, on the offensive line

"The national attention we got after the (Washington) game, I mean all year, it was: 'Nebraska is on its way back to Tempe. This is another national championship team.'

"When you're a young team and you haven't heard that, (when) people have been doubting you, you kind of stick your chest out a little bit and maybe become a little bit complacent."

— **I-back DeAngelo Evans**

"Despite the fact that we've been throwing the ball as well as we've been throwing it, teams still seem to be putting eight-nine-man fronts against us and are determined to stop the run."

"So we need to continue to throw the ball well. I don't think there's any question about that."

— **Solich**

"Our offense in high school was 75 to 80 percent pass. So we hardly run-blocked. It wasn't real difficult, but the schemes here are pretty difficult. There are so many defenses."

— **Lineman Dominic Raiola**

No Less Intense

Coach **Frank Solich** obviously hasn't lost the competitiveness that earned him All-Big Eight honors as a senior fullback for coach **Bob Devaney's** Cornhuskers in 1965.

According to some of his players, Solich is so intense prior to kickoff that he might be willing to put on pads and a helmet and joining them on the field.

"There's no way I want out there," he said recently. "Let's get that straight. But I do have the personality that I am somewhat enthusiastic about it, and I think that does show to the players."

"I don't see myself as being that emotional before games, or after games, or during games. But yet, I have one of those coach's voices where when I start to visit with them (the players), sometimes I think they feel I'm coming from maybe a little different perspective than I am."

Solich coaches the only way he can. "I just want to make sure I am coaching within my own personality and not trying to do something outside of my personality," he said. ■



QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

Sophomore I-back **DeAngelo Evans** has been hampered by injuries during his still-young career. He wasn't able to practice the week before the Oklahoma State game because of a foot injury.

The lack of practice was a significant factor in his sub-par performance against the Cowboys, he said. "When I got in the game, my pitch relationship wasn't as good as it probably needed to be."

As a result, "I just told myself no matter if I'm injured or not, I need to be on the field practicing. That was the approach I took my freshman year. No matter how bad I was hurting, I was going to be out there practicing. That's the thing I'm going back to now, just getting back on the field and practicing."

"If you don't practice, no matter how bad you're beat up, you're not going to play well on Saturday. As a player, you've got to be able to play through pain. I know about playing through pain."

"I just told myself I needed to be out there."

NEWCOMBE, CROUCH OR CHRISTO

Nebraska's use of three quarterbacks this season hasn't been a problem for center **Josh Heskew**, who doesn't take particular note of which of the three is in the game at a given time.

In the second half of the Oklahoma State game, for example, **Eric Crouch** replaced **Bobby Newcombe** so that the coaches could discuss some things with Newcombe, Solich said. His response in the huddle to Crouch, Heskew said, was: "Oh, are you in?" To which, he said, Crouch replied, pointing out the obvious: "Yes."

"It really does matter" who's playing quarterback, said Heskew.

ALWAYS WILLING TO CHANGE

Nebraska's quarterbacks have to be able to adapt and change plays at the line of scrimmage. The ability to audible is almost as important as being able to run and throw.

"In our type of offense, all week long we (the quarterbacks) work on our audibles," redshirt freshman quarterback Crouch said. "We get here 15 minutes before the whole team meets and we go over all the audibles, all the blitzes and anything that's going to take us out of a play."

"We make sure we know what we're going to do. Really, you've just got to know all the plays and you have to make sure you know all the right plays to run at all the right defenses."

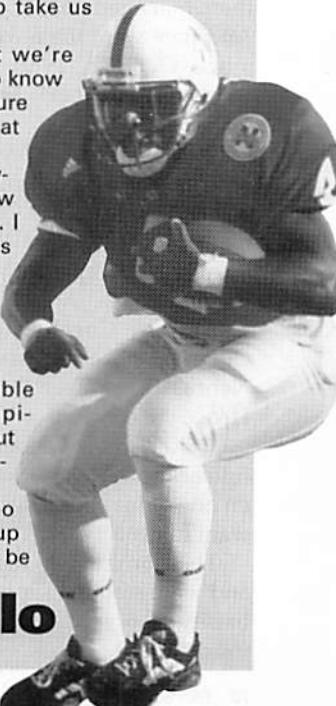
"You have to see where all the coverages are, and you've got to know where all your offensive players are. I think it's good because our offense is run more around an audible system, what play is the best to get into. And I think that's the best offense to have."

PARITY TIME

Nebraska has earned considerable respect with three national championships in the past four seasons. But that doesn't make it any easier to continue winning.

"I think there are those people who think Nebraska just needs to show up and that it will happen, the points will be there for us," Solich said. ■

DeAngelo Evans



Measure Of Success

*In a pinch, the Huskers should always be able to gain an inch (or a yard).
The OSU game doesn't change that theory*



**Mike
BABCOCK**

DEANGELO EVANS admitted concern.

"Any time Nebraska is held to 72 yards rushing, there's a problem," he said during a news conference on the Tuesday after the Cornhuskers' 24-17 victory against Oklahoma State. "I don't want to spend a lot of time talking about the Oklahoma State game. That's over. Now we want to move ahead."

There is no time to dwell on the previous week's game during the season. Even so, Nebraska's inability to run the ball against the Cowboys was so out of the ordinary that it couldn't be ignored.

Nebraska was limited to only 73 (not 72) yards rushing on 36 carries by a defense devised by Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Rob Ryan — Buddy's son. The defense, based on something Texas Christian had done long ago, was designed to stop the run. And clearly it did.

Nebraska went into the game ranked second in the nation in rushing, on the heels of a season-high 434 yards rushing in its 55-7 victory against Washington, and came away ranked sixth.

The 73 yards were the fewest by the Cornhuskers since a 35-10 loss at Oklahoma in 1975 — Nebraska, which had a more pass-oriented offense then, managed only 70 yards rushing. And they were the fewest in a victory since Oct. 22, 1966, when a Bob Devaney-coached team defeated Colorado, 21-19.

We're talking 32 years and five national championships ago.

Not counting the Oklahoma State game, Nebraska had rushed for fewer than 100 yards in only 12 games since then, most recently against Miami (82 yards) in the 1992 Orange Bowl.

And the Cornhuskers had lost 11 of those 12 games. Clearly, there has been a correlation between holding Nebraska to fewer than 100 yards rushing and winning. Hence the concern.

"I don't think anybody would guess that's possible," said fullback Joel Makovicka, who was dropped for a 2-yard loss on one of his six carries against Oklahoma State. "You never want to expect that."

The Cornhuskers lost yardage on six other running plays and were stopped for no gain on four others. They averaged barely two yards per carry. There was no room to run, inside or out.

Coach Frank Solich described the performance as "bothersome." And so it was.

Nebraska has led the nation in rushing in 11 of the last 18 seasons, and it was ranked lower than third in only one of the other seven seasons — the Cornhuskers were fourth in 1996.

"I certainly want the running game to continue to be one of the top, if not the top, in the country," Solich said during his weekly news conference on the Tuesday before the Texas A&M game. "I want the passing game to be very efficient and be something when teams decide to come up and play us on the run that we're able to go to it right now and have great confidence in it."

"And so we've tried to prepare our football team to be that way."

Nebraska would find a way to win, he said, "whether that means running the ball 95 percent of the time in the game or whether that means throwing 25 to 30 passes in order to get it done."

Joe Ledford



It is rare when an opposing team — let alone a single player — outrushes Nebraska, but that's what happened on Oct. 10 when Oklahoma State's Nathan Simmons outran the Cornhuskers, 114 to 110.

Exactly why the Cornhuskers didn't run more effectively against Oklahoma State was unclear.

The offensive line graded exceptionally high; it was perfect on a season-high 67 percent of its plays, and it wasn't charged with a penalty. But it had a season-low 29 "pancake" or knockdown blocks. And it allowed three quarterback sacks, short-circuiting the passing threat to some degree.

Typically, Nebraska's offensive line has been so dominant coming off the ball and driving the defense backward that running backs don't have to look for creases.

Backs have been able to pick up five yards simply by falling forward.

Ordinarily, the Cornhuskers' option offense has worked so well that by the time the quarterback has had to make a decision on whether to keep the ball or pitch it, he's already past the line of scrimmage.

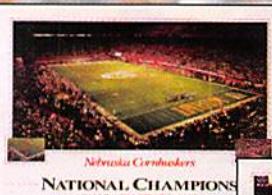
"The Oklahoma State game, we found some ways, some formations to get some big plays out of the passing game. So you hope that you have enough offense . . . to take care of the different schemes you're seeing and are surprised with, and that you can make adjustments in time to get it done," Solich said.

The variations have to supplement a running attack, however.

That's been the strength of Nebraska for two decades. At crunch time, the Cornhuskers have been able to line up and run right at the opposition. And it's no different now. ■

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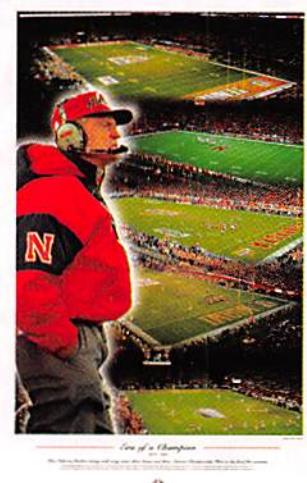
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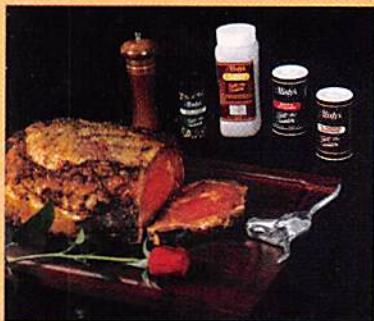
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Cornhuskers Scoring Points In The Community

For most of Nebraska's student-athletes, a commitment to the University of Nebraska extends beyond the playing field



**Bill
DOLEMAN**

BY HIS OWN choice, Dan Alexander's recruiting trip to Nebraska in December of 1994 was unlike any other. Sure, there was the requisite tour of the weight room, the training table and the like, but there was also a trip to the People's City Mission and the burn unit at St. Elizabeth's Community Health Center in Lincoln. Such visits aren't usually part of the recruiting itinerary. But Alexander had heard of community involvement opportunities available to Nebraska's student-athletes, and he wanted to see for himself.

"Those opportunities were never offered to me anywhere else, and I wanted to make a good impression," Alexander said. "I knew being involved was a priority here, and I said if I was going to spend four or five years of my life here, I wanted to be a part of the community in Lincoln. I wanted to let them know that I wanted to make a difference. Anyone in the public eye should give something back."

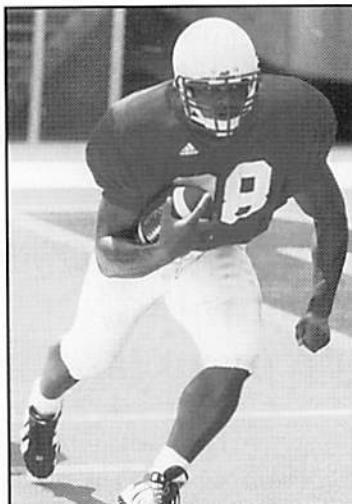
Alexander's attitude is refreshing, but it's hardly unique. At least not at Nebraska.

In fact, among those who made the mission and hospital visits with him that night four years ago were former Huskers Christian and Jason Peter and Grant Wistrom. According to Keith Zimmer, Nebraska's director of life skills, the opportunity to become involved in the community and in the state is open to all 700-plus Husker student-athletes, the majority of whom take advantage of that opportunity.

"It's not required, but we make sure every athlete is made aware that those opportunities exist," Zimmer said. "The reason we do it is because we want to promote a total-person program. The best preparation for life is to get them involved in more than just athletics. We emphasize personal, career and life skills development, so along those lines, it makes sense to get them involved in the community."

October is "National Make A Difference Month" and there have been a number of items on the Huskers' outreach agenda, including the kickoff of the "Tour of Excellence," which celebrates education. It was an event in which more than 2,000 students from central Nebraska gathered in Kearney to hear Big Red representatives from several sports speak on the importance of staying in school.

Other student-athletes were on hand to read to kids at



Dan Alexander, like many of his teammates, doesn't have to be asked to do charity work.

"Make A Difference Day" at the Lincoln Children's Museum, and for the third straight year, the Huskers helped with the "Dads of Kids with Disabilities" program.

"We get calls from other colleges and universities who have similar programs, but the others don't do it to the extent that we do at Nebraska," said Zimmer.

The highlights of the Husker outreach calendar are the annual "School is Cool Jams," which take place over two days in April. What began humbly as a program for 200 grade-schoolers at a Lincoln elementary school has grown into what could be called the largest pep rally for education in the world.

In each of the past three years, nearly 20,000 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders from all over Nebraska have taken part in the Jams listening to a number of Husker student-athletes talk to them about goal-setting, perseverance and that school is cool. In all, Zimmer says the Nebraska outreach program reaches more than 100,000 youth around the state each year.

"We have to make sure that we do it in an efficient manner in order to meet the demand," he said. "Which means that our challenge is to accommodate the public without sacrificing the student-athlete's priorities, and that's academics first, athletics second. The "School is Cool Jam" is an efficient way to have a big impact on several thousand kids from across the state at one time."

The Husker outreach program is much more than a one-event or one-month wonder. At Nebraska, making a difference is a year-round mission. For example, place-kicker Kris Brown has been the camp director of Pacific Pals summer youth group for disadvantaged kids, and a number of his teammates have assisted. Last August, the NU baseball team participated in the Lincoln Paint-a-thon, and the women's gymnastics team assisted with the cleanup of the October 1997 snowstorm.

"Coming up here, I wanted to be a part of the community," Alexander said. "If this was going to be my home away from home, then I wanted to do something positive for the state of Nebraska."

"It's my way of giving back to them for the opportunity that they gave me." ■

Bill Doleman's face is familiar to Cornhusker fans. He is host for several Nebraska-related television programs including the "Husker Show" and coaches' shows for Terry Pettit, Paul Sanderford and Frank Solich.

Missouri/Nebraska Who Cares?

Since Phil Bradley's last season in 1982, Tiger fans have gotten used to taking it from Nebraska



**Curt
McKEEVER**

A FRESHMAN English composition classmate of mine would always get a little more excited during the week preceding the Nebraska-Missouri game.

Of course, considering she grew up next to Tigers' quarterback Phil Bradley in Macomb, Ill., what choice did she have?

The year was 1979, and it was a good time to be a Missouri football fan.

Bradley and the Warren Powers-coached Tigers were coming off an 8-4 season that included a win against Louisiana State in the Liberty Bowl. That year, Mizzou also scored a stunning 35-31 win in Lincoln in the final game of the regular season to knock the Huskers out of the national championship hunt.

The rivalry was fierce and fun.

It intensified the following season when Norman Goodman made a controversial hit to NU I-back Jarvis Redwine's knee while Redwine was blocking on an extra-point kick.

It got downright nasty in 1982 when former Ralston High star Randy Jostes, who turned down an offer from NU to go to Missouri, leveled Husker quarterback Turner Gill with such force that Gill had to be hospitalized with a slight concussion. Nebraska fans accused Jostes of delivering a cheap shot.

But for a long time after that 23-19 win, it was tough to have any kind feelings for the Tigers, except maybe empathy.

Only once from 1983 to 1996 did Missouri come within 10 points of the Huskers.

But with Larry Smith now in his fifth season, the Tigers are clawing their way back to respectability.

It wasn't very long ago that I joked in a column how Smith had improved the Tigers to where they should be considered a legitimate threat to win the Nebraska Class A state high school championship. Boy, you talk about some folks with a sensitivity complex.

I suppose I can't blame them for their lack of a sense of humor. They were, after all, following a team that hadn't had a winning season since 1983.

Last year, all of that came to an end when Corby Jones and Brock Olivo led Mizzou to an 7-4 regular-season record and a bid to the Holiday Bowl. The mark included an excruciating overtime loss to Nebraska. Painful for Smith and everyone associated with the program.

After the game, an upset fan somehow got through the security at Folsom Field (I'm kidding about the security). Standing behind Tom Osborne, the man shouted an obscenity at the Nebraska coach, something along the line that the Huskers had really lost the game. Osborne shrugged aside the suggestions and commented, tongue-in-cheek, about how the Tiger fans were real good sports.

Seeing Osborne show his lighter side in a tense, public situation caused me to laugh. Although I would have preferred the irate fan to have chosen his words more carefully and shown some class, it was nice to see somebody with a passion for Mizzou football.

The lopsided results made people forget about the heated rivalries of the late 70s and 80s.

Smith has injected the fun back into the series.

It's about time.

Smith, in a recent *Sports Illustrated* story, was recalling how in 1993 he had secured a visit to Grant Wistrom's home in Webb City, Mo. Wistrom was the most coveted football player in the state.

"Grant was the type of player you could rebuild a program around," Smith said. "Naturally, I was excited about the prospect of meeting him. But the morning I was supposed to go down to see him, he called to cancel.

"But hey, that was Missouri football back then. You considered yourself lucky just to get into a kid's living room."

With Larry Smith, there are no mixed messages.

Can he keep the Tigers rolling? That's a tough one.

After Missouri's game at Nebraska Saturday, the Tigers finish the regular season at Texas Tech, against Colorado, at Texas A&M and against Kansas State.

Mizzou might be favored to win a couple of those, but it would surprise few if the Tigers lost them all.

Considering the 1997 season, that might not sit well with some Mizzou fans. But from this view, they should consider themselves lucky to have Smith leading the program.

There's a lot of renewed excitement. If you're a Nebraska fan, I guess that translates into a lot more nervousness about the Tigers. But that option sounds a lot more fun than what I've seen through most of 19 years. ■



Despite being the best player in the state, former rush end Grant Wistrom spurned Missouri in favor of Nebraska.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Tigers Look West For Production

Tailback Devin West has helped take some of the offensive pressure off of quarterback Corby Jones

By Mark DEROWITSCH

It's called the flea-kicker in Nebraska.

Missouri Coach Larry Smith has another name for it.

"One stinking play," he said.

It was one play that changed a college-football-world shocking Missouri victory into a dramatic come-from-behind improbable Husker squeaker.

Every college sports fan knows the details. Nebraska, down 38-31 with less a few seconds on the clock, had the ball at the Missouri 12-yard line on third down for what would be the final

play of the game. Quarterback Scott Frost rifled a pass over the middle, which bounced off the chest of Shevin Wiggins. As the ball was floating to the ground, Wiggins kicked it up and into the hands of Matt Davison just inches off the ground. The Huskers then won the game in overtime on Frost's 12-yard run.

Nebraska paid the price for having to pull out the game. The Huskers dropped from No. 1 in the polls to second behind Michigan, and after whipping Tennessee in the Orange Bowl, had to settle for a share of the national championship.

Missouri will get its first shot at revenge on Saturday when the Tigers visit Lincoln for a Big 12 Conference game at Memorial Stadium. The game will be played at 11:30 a.m. to accommodate regional television coverage.

Smith is not expecting an easier time with the Huskers in Lincoln, a place the Tigers haven't won at since 1978. In fact, the Huskers have won the last 19 games in the series, and two years ago defeated Missouri 51-7 at home.

"I think it will be a lot more difficult in Lincoln because that's their home setting," Smith said. "They play with more confidence and they're more relentless and reckless at home."

The Tigers plan to use the same tactics against Nebraska that seemed to work in Columbia, Mo.: Play mistake-free football and keep the score close.

Smith isn't the only one who used that same strategy. Oklahoma State used Missouri's formula plus a few new looks on defense and nearly pulled off an upset.

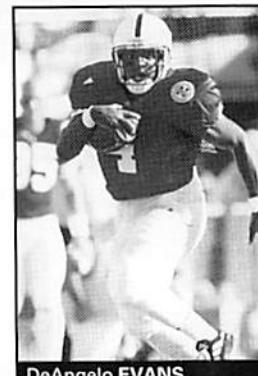
"Last year, we got in the ball game with them and stayed there," Smith said. "We didn't make a lot of mistakes and stayed in the game."

MISSOURI
(5-1)

NEBRASKA
(6-1)



Corby JONES



DeAngelo EVANS

October 24, 1998 • 11:30 a.m. (CST)
Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Nebraska

Oklahoma State played that same way. They played to stay with Nebraska."

Missouri will likely try to do that with a tough ground game designed to use a lot of time.

The Tigers have more firepower in their running game this time around, too. No longer does Missouri have to rely on quarterback Corby Jones to make its offense go.

Tailback Devin West is the second

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	3	Matt Davison*	6-0	180	So.
	8	John Gibson	5-11	180	So.
LT	69	Adam Julch**	6-5	315	Jr.
	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
LG	63	Jerome Sherman**	6-2	295	Jr.
	54	Dominic Raiola	6-2	300	Fr.
C	59	Josh Heskew***	6-3	290	Sr.
	54	Dominic Raiola	6-2	300	Fr.
RG	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
	55	Russ Hochstein*	6-3	280	So.
RT	65	Jason Schwab*	6-1	300	Jr.
	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
TE	88	Sheldon Jackson***	6-4	245	Sr.
	85	T.J. DeBates**	6-3	250	Jr.
OB	12	Bobby Newcombe*	6-0	195	So.
-or-	7	Eric Crouch	6-0	200	Fr.
FB	45	Joel Makovicka***	5-11	240	Sr.
	15	Willie Miller*	6-0	230	So.
IB	4	DeAngelo Evans*	5-9	210	So.
	36	Correll Buckhalter*	6-0	225	So.
WB	5	Shevin Wiggins**	5-11	200	Sr.
	82	Sean Applegate*	5-9	190	Jr.
PK	35	Kris Brown***	5-10	205	Sr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	57	Chad Kelsay***	6-3	250	Sr.
	83	Kyle Vanden Bosch*	6-4	260	So.
NT	96	Steve Warren**	6-1	305	Jr.
	70	Jason Lohr	6-3	275	Fr.
DT	99	Jason Wiltz**	6-4	310	Sr.
-or-	91	Loran Kaiser*	6-5	280	So.
RR	84	Mike Rucker***	6-6	250	Sr.
	81	Aaron Wills	6-2	240	Jr.
SLB	37	Tony Ortiz	6-0	215	Jr.
-or-	46	Brian Shaw**	6-1	215	Jr.
MLB	44	Jay Foreman***	6-1	240	Sr.
	13	Carlos Polk*	6-3	245	So.
WLB	1	Eric Johnson**	6-1	205	Sr.
	50	Julius Jackson**	6-0	235	Jr.
LCB	16	Erwin Swiney*	6-0	185	So.
	3	Keyuo Craver	6-0	180	Fr.
FS	21	Mike Brown**	5-10	205	Jr.
	19	Clint Finley*	5-11	200	So.
ROV	25	Joe Walker*	5-10	200	So.
	42	Troy Watchorn	5-11	195	So.
RBC	22	Ralph Brown**	5-9	180	Jr.
	9	Khari Reynolds*	5-10	185	So.
P	23	Bill Laffleur***	5-11	200	Sr.

Tentative 2 Deeps

MISSOURI DEFENSE

OLB	9	Marquis Gibson	6-2	225	Sr.
	36	Pat Duffy	6-1	236	So.
G	77	Pat Mingucci	6-2	266	Jr.
	90	Justin Wyatt	6-4	275	Sr.
NT	93	Jeff Marriott	6-5	288	Jr.
	98	Michael Gavins	6-8	300	Fr.
T	94	Steve Erickson	6-4	280	Jr.
	79	Terrell Jurineack	6-4	271	Jr.
E	96	Justin Smith	6-5	267	Fr.
	67	Danny McCamy	6-3	250	So.
SAM	48	Al Sterling	5-11	246	Sr.
	56	Duke Revard	6-3	232	Fr.
WILL	39	Barry Odom	6-0	219	Jr.
	51	Jamonte Robinson	6-2	210	Fr.
SS	1	Caldrinoff Easter	5-10	188	Sr.
	27	Clarence Jones	6-1	180	Fr.
HB	5	Carlos Posey	6-0	202	Jr.
	8	Martez Young	6-1	187	Sr.
FS	2	Harold Piersey	6-2	202	Jr.
	4	Julian Jones	5-11	189	So.
CB	22	Wade Perkins	6-1	189	Sr.
	21	Randy Potter	5-10	182	Sr.
P	17	Vince Sebo	6-1	228	Jr.

MISSOURI OFFENSE

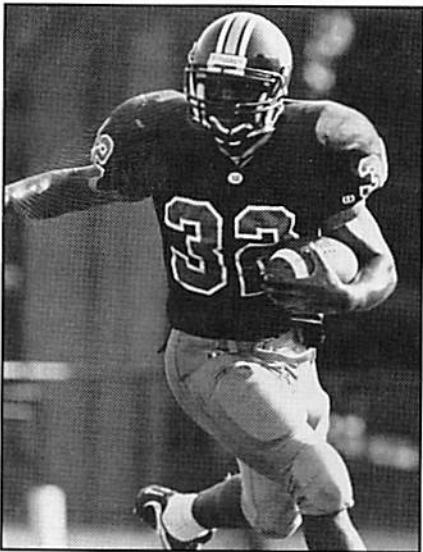
WR	6	Kareem Wise	6-3	216	Jr.
	80	John Dausman	6-1	184	So.
LT	64	Chris Meredith	6-5	296	Sr.
	72	Justin Bland	6-6	316	Fr.
LG	70	Cliff Smith	6-5	284	Sr.
	60	Jeff Hellerstedt	6-4	300	Fr.
C	76	Rob Riti	6-3	285	Jr.
	52	Michael Valadez	6-2	288	Jr.
RG	57	Craig Heimburger	6-3	313	Sr.
	59	Adrian Cole	6-4	306	Fr.
RT	69	Todd Neimeyer	6-5	310	Sr.
	74	Aaron Crittenden	6-5	280	Fr.
TE	88	Jake Stueve	6-3	252	Sr.
-or-	85	Dwayne Blakley	6-4	256	Fr.
QB	7	Corby Jones	6-1	222	Sr.
	10	Ryan Douglass	6-2	201	So.
TB	32	Devin West	6-2	225	Sr.
	47	Zain Gilmore	6-1	205	Fr.
FB	30	Rob West	6-0	240	Jr.
	28	Rashidi Johnson	6-0	236	So.
WR	84	Kent Layman	5-11	187	Jr.
	24	Eric Spencer	6-1	165	Fr.
K	18	Tim Geiger	5-11	177	Jr.

leading rusher in the the nation with 1,051 yards on 166 carries through six games, trailing only Ricky Williams of Texas. Against Iowa State two weeks ago, West rushed for 252 yards to lead the Tigers to a 35-19 victory.

When the game was on the line, the Tigers turned to West. West touched the ball every play during a 15-play drive. He had 14 carries and also caught a 15-yard pass from Jones, who was nursing a sore left foot.

West is well on his way to becoming the single-season rushing leader at Missouri. He's chasing the mark set by Joe Moore, who gained 1,312 yards on the ground in 1968.

West is having a Heisman-type season for the Tigers. At the beginning of



Devin West has been the man for Missouri this season, shattering the school record for rushing yards in a game with 319 against Kansas.

TB DEVIN WEST

VS

NU DEFENSIVE LINE

KEY MATCHUP

Against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M, Nebraska had trouble stopping the run, especially between the tackles. You can bet Missouri coach Larry Smith noticed and plans to give his workhorse in the backfield, tailback Devin West, plenty of chances against the Huskers.

Smith carried the ball 40 times and rushed for 252 yards against Iowa State, the second-best single-game performance in Tiger history. Of course, he was second to himself after establishing the standard with a 319-yard performance against Kansas earlier this season.

The Huskers, meanwhile, let Nathan Simmons of Oklahoma State and Texas A&M backs rush for at least 100 yards. The Huskers are still just giving up 121 yards per game, but that number is steadily climbing. For the Husker defense to work, stopping the run is the first priority. ■

the season, any discussion of a Heisman contender at Missouri centered around Corby Jones. Does West have a legitimate shot this season?

"Absolutely," Smith told the *Topeka Capital Journal*. "When you're the No. 2 rusher in the country behind another guy that's a legitimate candidate, you certainly should be considered."

While West has been the main man for the Tigers this season, Jones was the Tiger who the Huskers had trouble stopping last season. Jones threw for 233 yards and rushed for another 60 to give Missouri a chance to pull off the upset.

So far this year, Jones has thrown for 560 yards and rushed for another 260 despite facing Iowa State with an injury that nearly kept him on the sideline. He threw for 176 yards against the Cyclones.

There's a reason why Missouri has had so much success running the ball. Four senior offensive linemen — tackles Todd Neimeyer and Chris Meredith, guards Cliff Smith and Craig Heimbigner — and junior center Rob Riti have paved the way for the Tigers. Missouri ranks second nationally in rushing offense, averaging 296.4 yards per game. Only Air Force, at 309.3, is averaging more.

Defensively, the Tigers are more aggressive than they were a year ago. Missouri recorded just 17 sacks in 12 games last season, but they have 15 through its first five games this year. Leading the way is freshman linebacker Jamonte Robinson, who has three to go along with his 18 total tackles. But Robinson isn't the only freshman making an impact this year. Defensive end Justin Smith has started

all five games and has two sacks and four tackles for loss.

Cornerback Wade Perkins and free safety Harold Piersey lead the Tiger secondary. Both players have picked off two passes, while Perkins also has registered two quarterback sacks.

The Tigers have had some problems stopping the run, which bodes well for Nebraska. Missouri ranks 55th in the nation in rush defense, allowing nearly 150 yards on the ground per game. ■

TALE OF THE APE

Who Has The Edge?

QUARTERBACKS

Nebraska has had injury problems at quarterback all year. Bobby Newcombe has been battling through it, showing his all-around toughness. Corby Jones was all-conference a year ago. He may be even better this year.



RUNNING BACKS

Devin West has been a pleasant surprise for the Tigers and could play anywhere in the country, except Texas. Nebraska's duo of DeAngelo Evans and Joel Makovicka are ready to break out.



RECEIVERS

Despite injuries, Nebraska's group is underrated, but very talented. Could Air Solich be far off? Missouri has a solid group of receivers, but Nebraska can go three-deep at both receiver positions.



OFFENSIVE LINE

Missouri is posting Nebraska-type numbers, and it all starts up front. This is another area where Nebraska has been hit hard by the injury bug. Nevertheless, the Cornhuskers are still solid.



DEFENSIVE LINE

Nebraska is battered, but they're still the best in this game. Chad Kelsay is having a monster season and Lorin Kaiser has stepped up big. Missouri has a decent group, but it doesn't have Nebraska's depth.



LINEBACKERS

A standout, really. Nebraska gets the edge because of experience. Jay Foreman is a Butkus Award finalist and will be making his bid with a strong second half of the season. Brian Shaw has been solid, too.



SECONDARY

Husker cornerbacks are the tops in the Big 12. It's hard to go deep on NU. Missouri has a couple of solid performers in Harold Piersey and Caldrinoff Easter. Senior corner Wade Perkins is another to watch.



SPECIAL TEAMS

This is an area that may decide the game. The Huskers are solid; the Tigers are shaky. Joe Walker gives Nebraska a dangerous return threat, and Kris Brown is as automatic as a sellout at Memorial Stadium.



GAME RECAP

Now that's more like it. Nebraska seemed like its old self.

The Cornhuskers recovered from the disappointment of a 28-21 loss at Texas A&M the week before to defeat Kansas, 41-0, on a cool, damp, windy evening at Memorial Stadium.

And they did it by rushing for 466 yards on 79 carries, mostly between the tackles.

There wasn't a lot of variety in what they did, nor was there much finesse.

The Cornhuskers just lined up and ran right at Kansas. It was "Nebraska football, push guys off the ball, control the line of scrimmage," said center and co-captain Josh Heskew.

They also controlled the clock, finishing with an advantage of nearly 20 minutes in time of possession.

Heskew was all smiles when he met with reporters afterward. "When our coaches talk about, 'We're going to line up and see who has the bigger heart,' it really fires me up," he said.

And, he added, "the other guys, too."

That was the case from Monday's practice on.

Players on both sides of the ball "really went after each other hard," coach Frank Solich said. "You can't have that kind of practice day after day. There would be nothing left for the game."

Given what had happened the previous two weeks, however, such intensity was welcome. "You kind of get a feel for how your team's going to react by the way it practices," said Solich.

And, of course, he felt good about what he saw.

"I think everybody took it, to some degree, personal," he said of the A&M loss.

The defense had been vulnerable to big plays, and the offense had rushed for only 141 yards, a modest improvement over the 73 yards it gained on the ground in a 24-17 victory against Oklahoma State the week before, and certainly not "Nebraska football," to borrow Heskew's description.

Less than five minutes into the third quarter of the Kansas game, the Cornhuskers had already rushed for more yards than in the Oklahoma State and Texas A&M games combined.

To some extent, that was to be expected. Kansas was ranked last in the Big 12 and 99th in the nation in rushing defense, plus the Jayhawk defense was weakened by injuries. Starters Steve Bratten, a linebacker, and Muhammad Abdul-Rahim, a cornerback, didn't even make the trip to Lincoln.

But that didn't make the effort any less pleasing to Solich.

"It was really good to see our linemen coming off the ball, see our backs running hard, see the receivers getting down the field (and throwing blocks)," he said.

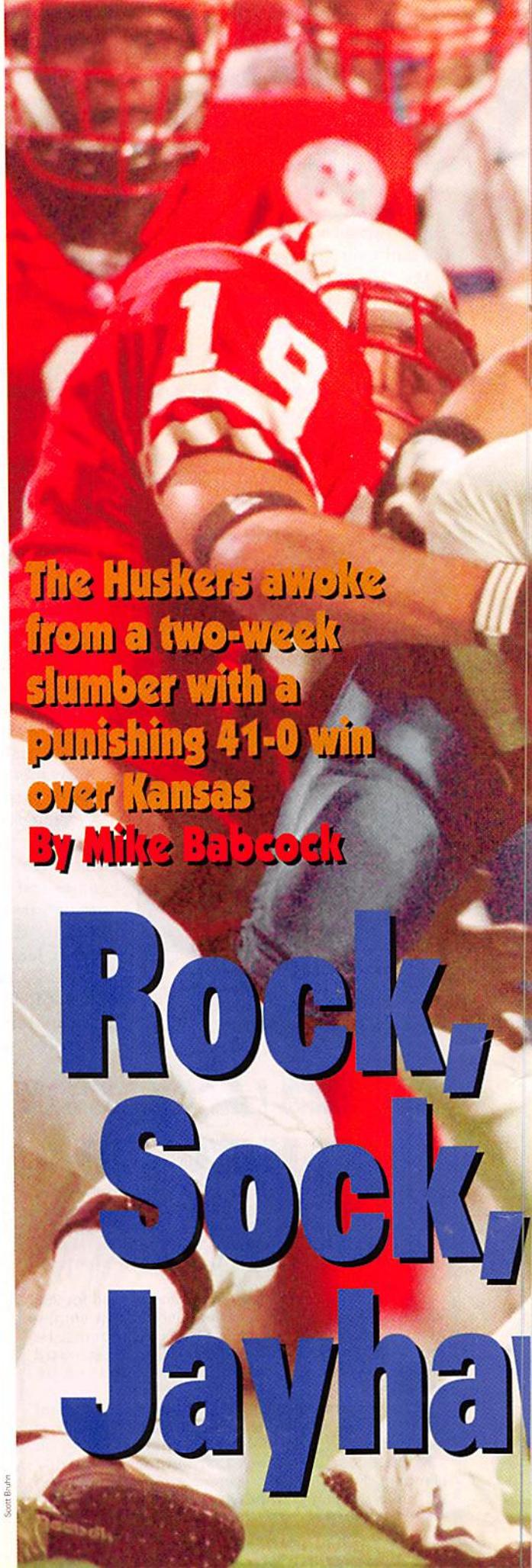
The offensive line, in particular, seemed determined to make a statement.

"We're capable of getting on people and getting people moved around up front," Solich said. "I thought we stayed with blocks a lot longer. I thought the offensive line played very well."

Correll Buckhalter thought so, too. The soft-spoken sophomore I-back got the most out of his 18 carries, rushing for 133 yards and three touchdowns. "Correll, I thought he played excellent," said quarterback Bobby Newcombe. "He went after every yard he could get."

Buckhalter got the start, his first since the third game at California,

Scott Burn
The Blackshirts held Dustin Curry (31) and Kansas to just 220 yards of total offense in Nebraska's first shutout of the season.



**The Huskers awoke
from a two-week
slumber with a
punishing 41-0 win
over Kansas
By Mike Babcock**

Rock, Sock, Jayha!



nk

4TH & INCHES

More News From The Kansas Game

• The victory was Nebraska's 46th in a row at Memorial Stadium, the longest current streak in Division I-A of the NCAA and the fifth-longest streak all-time. It was the Cornhuskers' 30th in a row against Kansas, as well as their 30th in a row in Homecoming games.

• Nebraska-Kansas is the longest continuous series in Division I-A at 93 games. The Cornhuskers have dominated the series, compiling an astounding 81-21-3 record. Nebraska has outscored the Jayhawks 1,377-230 during its 30-game winning streak in the series. The Cornhuskers have scored 40 or more points in 23 of the games and allowed 10 points or fewer in 21 of the games.

The shutout was Nebraska's tenth during the 30-game winning streak. Kansas has not scored against the Cornhuskers in 10 quarters, dating to the third quarter of the 1996 game.

• Cornhusker place-kicker **Kris Brown** scored 11 points in the game to increase his school-record career total to 348. He increased his school record for consecutive extra-point kicks to 116.

• Wingback **Frankie London** suffered a fractured left tibia in the game. That appeared to be the Cornhuskers' most serious injury in the game. Others who were injured included tight end **Sheldon Jackson** (right knee and foot sprain), defensive tackle **Loran Kaiser** (right knee bruise), defensive back and kick returner **Joe Walker** (right knee MCL sprain) and I-back **Dan Alexander** (left ankle sprain).

• Nebraska was penalized a season-high nine times for 69 yards. This was the first game this season and the first time in 19 games that the Cornhuskers did not have at least one quarterback sack.

• For what it's worth, Nebraska's record in night games is now 37-12-3, including 8-1 at home.

• Sophomore **Matt Davison** got his second consecutive start at split end because senior **Kenny Cheatham** is sidelined by an ACL problem and a shoulder sprain. Davison caught two passes for 30 yards, leaving him far and away the team's leading receiver with 25 catches for 321 yards.

He set a school record for receiving yards against Texas A&M, 167 on 10 catches.

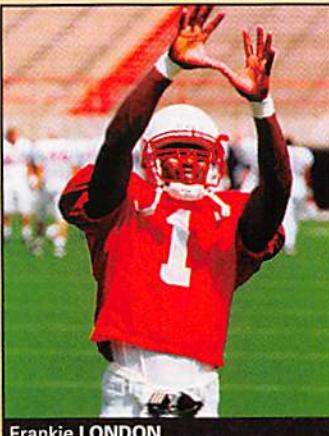
• I-back **Correll Buckhalter**, who rushed for 133 yards and three touchdowns, leads Nebraska in rushing for the season with 477 yards on 74 carries, an average of 6.4 yards per attempt.

The sophomore from Collins, Miss., has scored seven touchdowns.

• The Cornhuskers converted two of three turnovers into touchdowns. For the season, they have converted nine of their opponents 13 turnovers into points, including eight touchdowns.

• Walker's 30-yard punt return set up Nebraska's first touchdown. During a news conference on Tuesday before the game, coach **Frank Solich** praised the kicking teams. "If anything has carried us a little bit, it's probably been our kicking game," he said. "I think, to some degree, that has been the most stable part of our football team, in that in most games, we've played well enough to win in the kicking game and there are some games that the kicking game has really turned it in our favor.

"That's been real pleasant." ■



Frankie LONDON

replacing DeAngelo Evans, who has been slowed by a bruised tailbone, suffered on his first carry in the Oklahoma State game.

In the middle of the week, it appeared Evans would be able to play.

"He did not feel very good yesterday (Friday) running and he didn't feel very good warming up," Solich said of Evans.

Sophomore Dan Alexander spelled Buckhalter against Kansas and rushed for 90 yards on 15 carries.

Nebraska scored on its first possession, capitalizing on good field position provided by Joe Walker's 30-yard punt return, covering 47 yards on six plays for a touchdown. Buckhalter did the honors with a 32-yard scamper, aided by a crushing block from fullback Joel Makovicka.

The Cornhuskers had to settle for a Kris Brown field goal on their second possession, before defining in dramatic fashion on their third possession exactly what their offensive strategy was.

Walker intercepted a third-down Zac Wegner pass at the Nebraska 1-yard line with 1:19 remaining in the first quarter, and from there the Cornhuskers drove to the Kansas 15-yard line on 14 plays, all runs. Monte Christo replaced Newcombe, in a predetermined plan, and directed the drive, which ended when Buckhalter lost a fumble.

But the ground rules had been established.

Nebraska's next offensive series was a rerun. The Cornhuskers drove 73 yards on 12 plays, and chewed up nearly seven minutes on the clock, to score a touchdown with 13 seconds remaining before halftime.

Newcombe scored the touchdown from less than a yard away after being stopped on the previous play, a fourth down nullified when Kansas was penalized for lining up in the neutral zone.

That touchdown was "definitely a confidence-booster," said Newcombe.

Nebraska's final touchdown came on a 12-play, 95-yard drive, capped by a 6-yard run up the middle by Billy Legate, the third-string fullback and one of 10 Cornhuskers who carried the ball.

As it turned out, the first touchdown was all Nebraska needed. The defense saw to that, posting its first shutout since the Kansas game last season — 35-0 at

1998 Schedule/Record (6-1)

Aug. 29	vs. Louisiana Tech\$	W, 56-27
Sept. 5	Ala.-Birmingham	W, 38-7
Sept. 12	@ California	W, 24-3
Sept. 26	Washington	W, 55-7
Oct. 3	vs. Oklahoma St.&	W, 24-17
Oct. 10	@ Texas A&M	L, 28-21
Oct. 17	Kansas	W, 41-0
Oct. 24	Missouri	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 31	Texas	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 7	@ Iowa St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 14	@ Kansas St.	1:10 p.m.
Nov. 27	Colorado	1:30 p.m.

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Lawrence.

The week before that game, the Cornhuskers shut out Texas Tech, 29-0.

Like this year's Kansas game, the Tech game was Nebraska's Homecoming. The Cornhuskers also posted a shutout in their 1996 Homecoming game, defeating Baylor, 49-0.

The shutout was "something we really wanted to accomplish this year," said senior rush end Mike Rucker. "It definitely was a booster for the defense. That's what we wanted."

Shutting out a Kansas team that was averaging 33 points per game was "a huge thing for our defense," rush end and co-captain Chad Kelsay said. "It really made our defense feel good.

"Now we've got something we can build on."

Kelsay saw the potential for such an effort. "It helped we had a good week of practice," he said. "But you've got to take what you do in practice and apply it to the game.

"Tonight we did a pretty good job of keeping the big plays down."

Kansas had little success rushing or passing. The Jayhawks finished with 99 yards on the ground and 121 yards through the air. Wegner completed 8 of 25 passes, including the Walker interception.

The Jayhawks' longest play was a 29-yard pass from Wegner to Michael Chandler.

Nebraska's offense seemed to lack imagination, an observation that brought a smile to Solich's face. "When you're running the power game, you're not going to think there's much variety," he said. "Any time you call a play and you can get 6, 7 yards, you can keep coming back to that play.

"There's an awful lot of offense we didn't use. But I'd rather not have to use a lot of it."

Newcombe threw only eight passes, completing five for 79 yards, just enough to keep Kansas off balance. "If we run the ball 80 times and score 40 points, that's fine with me," he said.

Nebraska's run defense will be seriously tested the next two weeks by Missouri's Devin West and Texas' Ricky Williams. Its running game will also face a significant challenge in mid-November when the Cornhuskers travel to Manhattan, Kan., to play high-flying Kansas State.

So the Kansas game has to be kept in proper perspective.

"I don't think you can get too up for any victories," said Makovicka,

who rushed for 61 yards and caught one pass for 25 yards. "I don't think the guys will get any false sense of security."

Solich agreed. False security? "I don't think so," he said.

"We played pretty well against Washington and then we struggled the next two weeks. We've got to be hitting on all cylinders in this league. I think our team understands that. In some ways we're improving on some things. But you don't want to get to where you're feeling comfortable."

That isn't likely after the Oklahoma State and Texas A&M games. "We wanted to come out and execute better, and I thought for the most part, we

did better than the last two weeks," Makovicka said.

"The last two games before this were pretty demoralizing for us," said Heskew.

For two weeks, Nebraska was a shadow of itself. The Cornhuskers didn't do a particularly good job of controlling the line of scrimmage, offensively or defensively. The loss at Texas A&M "will help us more than hurt us," said middle linebacker Jay Foreman. "It was a big wake-up call."

And they're not likely to doze off again.

"Right now, we know we've got kind of an uphill battle to get where we want to be," Kelsay said. ■

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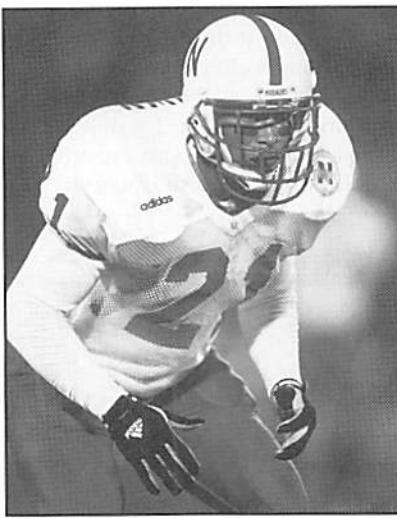
Nebraska vs Kansas
Oct. 17, 1998 • Lincoln, Nebraska

Score By Quarters

Kansas	0	0	0	0	—	0
Nebraska	10	7	14	10	—	41

Team Stats

	KU	NU
First Downs	11	28
Rushing	6	24
Passing	4	4
Penalty	1	0
Rushing Attempts	31	79
Yards Gained Rushing	116	475
Yards Lost Rushing	17	9
Net Yards Rushing	99	466
Net Yards Passing	121	79
Passes Attempted	25	9
Passes Completed	8	5
Had Intercepted	1	0
Total Plays	56	88
Total Net Yards	220	545
Avg. Gain Per Play	3.9	6.2
Fumbles-Lost	2-2	4-2
Penalties-Yards	3-15	9-69
Punts-Yards	7-260	2-85
Avg. Per Punt	37.1	42.5
Punt Returns-Yards	1-4	5-43
Interceptions-Yards	0-0	1-0
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	1-26
Kickoff Returns-Yards	3-48	0-0
Possession Time	20:13	39:47



Mike Brown moved back to his rover position this week as Clint Finley got his first start of the year at free safety.

Individual Leaders

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	18	133	7.4	32	3
Alexander, D.	15	90	6.0	20	0
Christo, M.	7	62	8.9	42	0
Makovicka, J.	11	61	5.5	11	0
Newcombe, B.	12	26	2.2	9	1
Runtly, J.	1	26	26.0	26	0
Legate, B.	3	23	7.7	11	1
White, D.	5	23	4.6	7	0
Miller, W.	5	16	3.2	7	0
Kingston, B.	2	6	3.0	5	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Newcombe, B.	5-8-0	62.5	79	0
Christo, M.	0-0-0	0.0	0	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Davison, M.	2	30	15.0	21	0
Makovicka, J.	1	25	25.0	25	0
Wistrom, T.	1	21	21.0	21	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
Brown, K.	2	2	28

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Walker, J.	3	33	11.0	30	0
Brown, R.	1	7	7.0	7	0
London, F.	1	3	3.0	3	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
none					

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Johnson, E.	3	4	7	0	0	0
Craver, K.	3	2	5	0	0	0
Siechta, J.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Finley, C.	2	1	3-1-11	0	0	0
Walker, J.	2	1	3-1-1	1-0	0	0
Reynolds, K.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Kelsay, C.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Rucker, M.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Wills, A.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Witzl, J.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Kaiser, L.	2	0	2	0	0	0

KANSAS

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Winbush, D.	14	39	2.8	10	0
Bowles, M.	3	21	7.0	14	0
Curry, D.	6	19	3.2	7	0
Bruce, J.	5	12	2.4	5	0
Norris, M.	3	8	2.7	5	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Wegner, Z.	8-25-1	32.0	121	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Chandler, M.	3	52	17.3	29	0
Bowles, M.	1	26	26.0	26	0
Patterson, S.	1	21	21.0	21	0
Childs, H.	1	9	9.0	9	0
Hill, H.	1	8	8.0	8	0
Gulley, J.	1	5	5.0	5	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
none			

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Childs, H.	1	4	4.0	4	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Childs, H.	2	34	17.0	19	0
Winbush, D.	1	12	12.0	12	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Allen, M.	5	11	16	0	0	0
Brown, P.	8	5	13	1-1	0	0
Rogers, M.	5	7	12	0	0	0
Harris, J.	4	7	11	0	0	0
Coellner, C.	5	3	8	1-1	0	0
Erb, G.	3	5	8	1-1	0	0
Rayford, D.	4	2	6	1-3	0	0
Davidson, A.	1	5	6	1-3	0	0
Johnson, D.	1	4	5	0	0	0
Dwyer, N.	0	4	4	0	0	0
Carter, K.	1	3	4	1-1	0	0
Caston, H.	2	2	4	0	0	0
Johnson, J. J.	2	2	4	0	0	0
LeClair, A.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Williams, J.	0	3	3	0	0	0
Bowers, T.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Doyle, C.	0	2	2	1-3	0	0

'98 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	7	74	477	68.1	7
Makovicka, J.	7	67	337	48.1	2
Evans, D.	3	38	218	57.8	4
Newcombe, B.	5	74	195	39.0	8
Alexander, D.	5	37	177	35.4	4
Crouch, E.	4	25	134	33.5	4
Christo, M.	4	27	125	31.3	2
Miller, W.	7	17	88	62.0	2
Runtly, J.	3	2	31	10.3	0
Wiggins, S.	6	6	29	4.8	0
Legate, B.	6	5	28	4.7	1
White, D.	5	6	27	5.4	0
Brown, L.	1	1	13	13.0	0
Kingston, B.	2	3	9	4.5	0
Grager, N.	1	1	3	3.0	0
Tillery, A.	1	1	3	3.0	0
Stanislav, J.	1	1	1	1.0	0
London, F.	7	1	-2	-0.3	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Newcombe, B.	4	43-68-1	63.2	647	1
Crouch, E.	4	19-37-1	51.4	236	1
Christo, M.	4	14-18-0	77.8	196	2

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	TD
Davison, M.	7	25	321	13.0	45.9
Wiggins, S.	6	12	180	15.0	30.1
Cheatham, K.	5	10	88	8.8	17.6
Jackson, S.	7	9	246	27.3	35.1
Buckhalter, C.	7	6	30	5.0	4.3
Haake, B.	6	5	38	7.6	6.3
Evans, D.	3	3	23	7.7	7.7
Wistrom, T.	7	2	84	42.0	12.0
Makovicka, J.	7	2	42	21.0	6.0
Debates, T. J.	6	1	16	16.0	2.7
Brown, L.	1	1	11	11.0	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, K.	7	7	5	48

DEFENSE

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

NU's Top 10 QBs...

Turner Gill

He was a seminal figure in the evolution of the option offense that has served the Cornhuskers so well for nearly two decades

Turner Gill changed the standard by which Nebraska's quarterbacks are measured.

He was a seminal figure in the evolution of the option offense that has served the Cornhuskers so well for nearly two decades. He could run as well as pass. "Turner's the best athlete we've ever had at quarterback," then-coach Tom Osborne said prior to Gill's senior season in 1983.

"Vince Ferragamo had a better touch on the ball, and Dave Humm was a better pure passer."

But neither was as versatile as Gill. "As far as running, leading, knowledge of the offense — the whole works — Turner is the most effective quarterback we've ever had," Osborne said.

That Osborne would be saying such things was no surprise to Nebraska fans, whose expectations for Gill when he arrived from Fort Worth, Texas, in the fall of 1980 were lofty.

He led Arlington Heights High School to 31 victories in 35 games over three seasons, completing 60 percent of his passes for 1,846 yards and rushing for 814 yards as a senior.

He was the focus of spirited recruiting by Nebraska and Oklahoma after crossing Texas off his list. "If I was still coaching and he got away, I'd be sick," former Texas coach Darrell Royal said.

"Everyone predicted greatness for Turner Gill when he was in high school," Jimmy Johnson, the coach at Oklahoma State at the time, said in 1983. "It looks like he proved them right."

Gill was a first-team All-Big Eight

selection three times. His record as a starter was 28-2, including 20-0 in conference games.

And he finished fourth in voting for the Heisman Trophy in 1983.

NU I-back Mike Rozier won the award, of course.

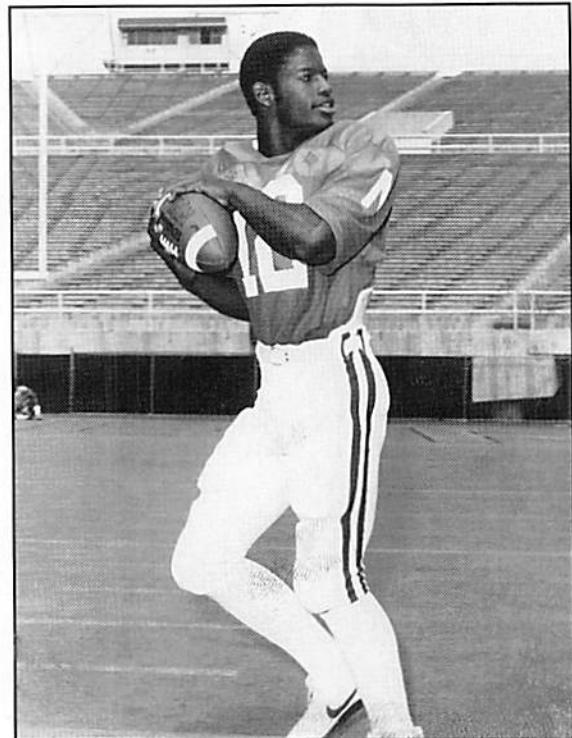
Gill's name remains prominent in the record book. He's fourth in career passing, with 231-of-428 completions (54 percent) for 3,317 yards and 34 touchdowns, with 11 interceptions.

He is third in career touchdown passes and sixth in total offense, with 4,634 yards.

His 1,516 passing yards in 1983 rank sixth all-time. His 2,047 total offense yards that season rank seventh. And his pass efficiency rating of 152.7 ranks fifth.

He threw 14 touchdown passes and only four interceptions for the "Scoring Explosion" team that came up a two-point conversion short of a national championship in his final season.

Gill had the athletic skills to play immediately, but he spent his first collegiate season on the freshman team, leading it to five victories and breaking the freshman record for total



offense with 981 yards, completing 34-of-52 passes (65.4 percent) for 679 yards and eight touchdowns.

He was the No. 3 quarterback going into his sophomore season, behind senior Mark Mauer and junior Nate Mason. He didn't get his first start until the fifth game, against Colorado.

By then, Cornhusker fans were restless. The team had lost two of its first three games — Nebraska's worst start since 1960 — and been lethargic in the first half of a victory against Auburn.

There was a smattering of boos in Memorial Stadium as the team left the field at halftime, trailing the Tigers 3-0. But Gill came off the bench to direct a 17-point second half and set the stage for his debut as a starter. He would relinquish the job only briefly due to an injury to his lower right leg.

Gill completed 9-of-14 passes for 178 yards and a school-record-tying four touchdowns in his first start, a 59-0 victory against Colorado.

Gill started five more games before suffering the leg injury in a 31-7 victory against Iowa State. He was sidelined for the final regular-season game against Oklahoma and the Orange Bowl game against Clemson. And

there were rumors that he might never play football again.

"It got out of proportion," head trainer and physical therapist George Sullivan said prior to the 1982 season. "Everybody had a viewpoint because everybody's Aunt Martha had the same injury."

"No one had heard of an accident like that before, and then after it happened, there were suddenly 500 similar ones, even though no two are alike. Everybody got into the act."

"Every quack in the nation wanted to treat him. People were telling the doctors to use everything from grape peels and Southern stump water to healing herbs in the back room."

The doctors said from the beginning that the injury would heal with time.

"I was amazed when I heard people saying he'd never play again," said Osborne. "We couldn't have made any more statements than we did, and yet people still asked if Turner was going to be all right."

Gill was held out of scrimmages in the spring of 1982, but by the fall he was ready to play.

After the controversial 27-24 loss at Penn State in the third game of the 1982 season, he directed the Cornhuskers to 22 consecutive victories and within a tipped pass of a national title.

Nebraska finished the 1982 season ranked No. 3 in the nation, and it was No. 1 in the Associated Press poll from preseason to pre-bowl in 1983, before the 31-30 Orange Bowl loss against Miami.

The Cornhuskers finished No. 2 in both major polls in 1983.

Gill spent two seasons with the Montreal Concorde in the Canadian Football League, then played three seasons in the Cleveland Indians' minor league system — he was a third-round pick in the major league draft in high school and considered bypassing his senior season at Nebraska to play baseball.

He began his coaching career as a volunteer assistant at North Texas in 1989. He was a graduate assistant at Nebraska in 1990 and a graduate assistant at Southern Methodist in 1991.

Osborne brought him back to Nebraska to coach the quarterbacks in 1992.

The decision to return was easy, Gill has said. He came to Nebraska in the first place because of Osborne. "If he wasn't the coach, I probably

10 QUESTIONS

Huskers Illustrated talks with rush end MIKE RUCKER

President Clinton — keep him or impeach him?

I say keep him. He's human. Sometimes when you're a celebrity, people think you're different. I'm not condoning what he did, but a lot of people do that stuff. It's their decision. If it were affecting the way he runs the country, I'd say impeach him. It's not, and it's his business. It should be taken care of with his family.

What is your favorite NFL team?

I would say the Kansas City Chiefs, for the simple fact I grew up in St. Joseph, Missouri. I have a lot of memories of the Chiefs. I have a friend (ex-Husker defensive back Eric Warfield) playing there now. I like (linebacker) Derrick Thomas. (Former Chiefs lineman) Neil Smith played here at Nebraska.

At which bowl game did you have the most fun?

I'd say last year's Orange Bowl, probably for the simple fact it meant more to me because I was playing a lot more. In the others, I wasn't really in the scheme of things. So last year I cherished it a little more.

What is your all-time favorite Halloween costume?

(Long pause) . . . That's going way back. The last Halloween I remember I dressed up as a ghost. But you'd have to go back in the archives on that one.

Leno or Letterman?

I would say Leno. I don't watch either of them very much. When I did watch Leno, it was around Sturgis time, and he was going to wrestle Hulk Hogan.

What's the most exciting thing to do in St. Joseph?

There's not much . . . probably cruise the Bell Highway. The Bell Highway is the main highway that goes through St. Jo, past where all the businesses are. Up and down it, up and down it. That's all I did when I was growing up.

If the injury problems at quarterback persist, could you step in and do the job?

Hmm. I don't think I could. I can't throw very well, but I might be able to run the option. I don't know, though, the way (Nebraska defensive lineman) Jason Wiltz looked running with the ball after his interception, maybe he could run the option.

If you could play for any other college team, who would it be?

I might play for Missouri. I like Missouri. I grew up there and I still keep up with them. The only game I want them to lose is when we play them.

If you had the money, would you sit in the luxury boxes being built at Nebraska, or would you sit amongst the fans?

I'd probably sit amongst the fans. In the box, you don't really get to hear things. You're just not in the environment. I think I'd be down in the student section. Plus, them boxes are expensive.

What is your most embarrassing moment on the football field?

We were always taught here that when you're tired, you tap your helmet and the coaches will replace you. As a freshman, it was me and Chad (Kelsay)'s first game, down at Oklahoma State. We were last on the totem pole at rush end, and all the regulars were done for the game because it was a blowout.

We were on kickoff coverage. We ran down there for the kickoff. Pretty soon after that, I started getting so tired. I started tapping my helmet and, of course, nobody would come in for me. They were just sitting there on the sideline laughing, and I was tapping away on my helmet. I basically started banging on my helmet, and I couldn't breathe. Even (former assistant coach) Tony Samuel was laughing. He said, 'It's your first game, you have to work yourself into shape.' ■

wouldn't have been at Nebraska," Gill said.

"I'm almost certain (of that) because I grew up really thinking about going to Oklahoma. I knew about them. I didn't know about Nebraska. I really didn't. But Coach

Osborne, after I met him and sat down and got to know him and see what was going on, it really was somewhat of a simple decision."

And that decision has changed the way Cornhusker quarterbacks are perceived. ■

PLAYER PROFILE

When Erwin Swiney moved to Lincoln and enrolled at Northeast High School for the second semester of his sophomore year, his plan was as clear as it was simple — he just wanted to graduate.

And as soon as he received his diploma, his plan was to go "right back home."

Home was Dallas, Texas. It still is, for that matter.

"Dallas will always be my home," he said.

Swiney was born in Dallas, and

Dallas a lot. But when I got here and got relaxed, I realized things were a lot more calm and a lot slower speed. I had the opportunity to find myself.

"I guess that's why I've made it here (at Nebraska) so far."

Among the things Swiney found within himself was the passion for playing football that he had lost before his freshman year at Skyline High School in Dallas.

He had enjoyed football as a youngster, competing in pick-up games involving teams from the apartment complexes in his neighborhood.

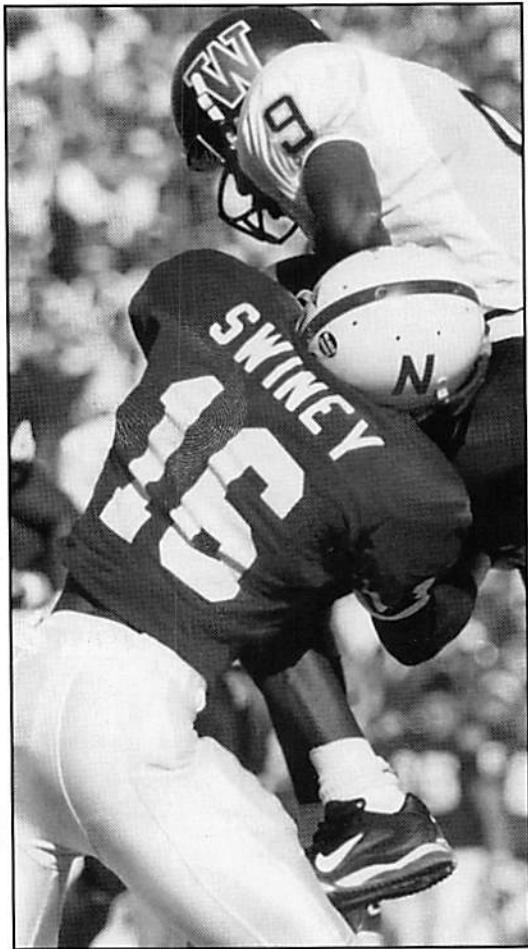
The games, of course, were "pretty rough," he said. "I took some pretty big hits. I

Not playing for two years was "really a big setback."

After he became accustomed to his new surroundings in Lincoln, he began thinking about playing football again. Mark King, his coach at Northeast High, encouraged him to go out for the team after watching him in a physical education class. "He sort of persuaded me," Swiney said.

"But I always wanted to. I had the opportunity in Dallas, but I lost it. I realized I could gain it back. I had a chance to start all over again, start anew. That's how I took it once I got to Northeast."

He was an immediate success, starting for the Rockets his junior year,



he'd be there now if his mom hadn't sent him to Lincoln to live with his dad. He also would be "in a heap of trouble" if he were still in Dallas.

"I know that," said Nebraska's sophomore cornerback.

"I wouldn't be in college, I don't believe, the way I was going."

Swiney resisted the move to Lincoln at first.

"It was tough," he said. "I still miss

Saving CB Swiney

Up until four years ago, the 'Big D' in Erwin Swiney's life wasn't defense; it was Dallas. But a change of address and a recommitment to get his life in order has the sophomore corner earning league-wide respect

remember one time a friend of mine hit me and made me fly flat, like an airplane propeller."

He attributes his experience playing apartment-complex football to making him the player he is now. "I think being in that situation, competing against older guys, helped me," he said.

Swiney continued to play football in junior high. But after he got to high school, he lost interest. "I started to hang with the wrong crowd and started to get in trouble," he said.

"I didn't take it (football) too seriously, so I just stopped playing."

In retrospect, he regrets not playing as a freshman or sophomore. "Oh man, all the time, because I realize how good I could be now, how much better I could be," he said.

recording 500 yards receiving and scoring seven touchdowns as a wide receiver and intercepting three passes as a defensive back. His senior year, he was an all-class, first-team all-state receiver in the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers.

Swiney's speed and athletic ability drew recruiting interest from several major colleges, among them Nebraska, Notre Dame, Kansas State, Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming. He was timed in the 40-yard dash in 4.39 seconds at Nebraska's summer camp, before his senior year at Northeast, and he had efforts of 415 pounds in the squat and 275 pounds in the bench press in the state powerlifting meet.

He was swift and strong, the perfect combination for a defensive back.

Even though he lived in Lincoln, he had no special affinity for the Cornhuskers. He had grown up in Dallas, and he hadn't paid much atten-

tion to college football anyway.

"I didn't follow it," he said. "I never really watched it on television."

Once Nebraska began recruiting him, he had no doubts about becoming a Cornhusker.

He did have doubts about his ability, however. "Nebraska started recruiting me when I was a junior. That was my first season, and I still didn't really know if I could play for them," he said. "I just wanted to play football. I wasn't thinking about what type of level. I just wanted to play anywhere."

"At first, I was going to go to any college I could get my hands on."

By the time the Cornhuskers offered him a scholarship, he had decided he would accept — though he didn't want to seem overly eager. "I made people think I was thinking about it," he said.

"But really I wasn't. It was the best thing for me, for my situation. I thought, hey, I might as well go to college here. Plus, they have great teams. So you can't beat that."

Even though he didn't expect to play as a freshman, much less be a starter, "I had sort of a feeling that I would probably be out there on the sideline (as a back-up)," he said.

Swiney capitalized on opportunities to play, becoming the starting left cornerback in the fourth game last season. He was among six true freshmen who played on the 1997 national championship team.

Swiney talks to youngsters about staying in school and out of trouble. And he speaks from experience. "I tell them to take advantage of the situation they're in and don't give up," he said.

He hasn't turned away from his friends in Dallas. "I keep in touch," he said.

"It's important to keep in touch with them so they can see how I'm doing, how I've changed, how I came from a sticky situation and turned it around. It's made a big difference in my life."

Many of those friends simply haven't had the chance his move to Lincoln gave him.

"I had the same mindset they have," Swiney said. "We were running around doing those things, and we had dreams of what we wanted to do, (like) play football. I've got friends that are way faster than me. But they don't take the time out to apply it to sports."

He wouldn't have taken the time, either, if not forced to by the move. ■

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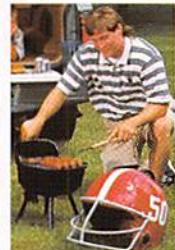
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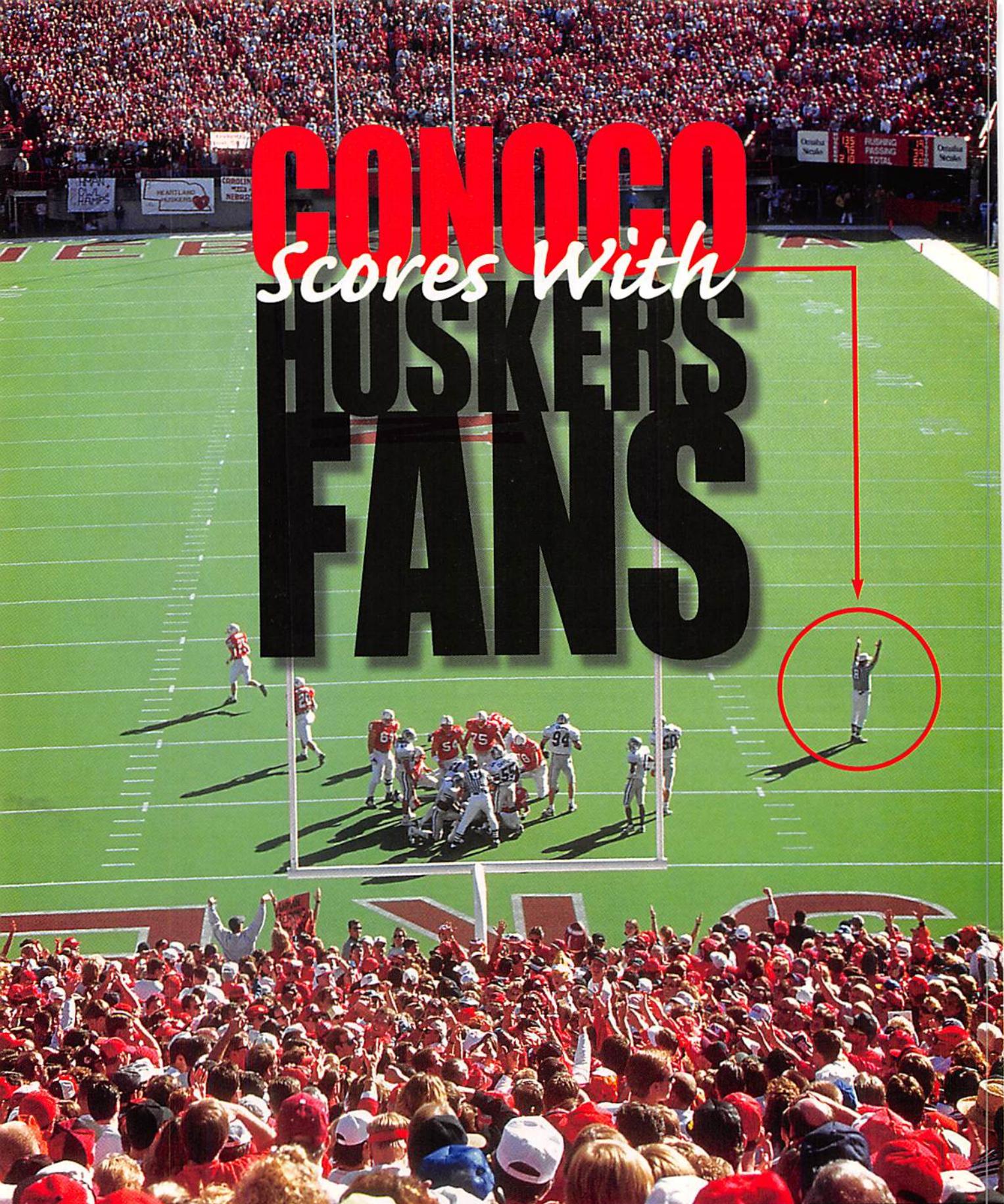
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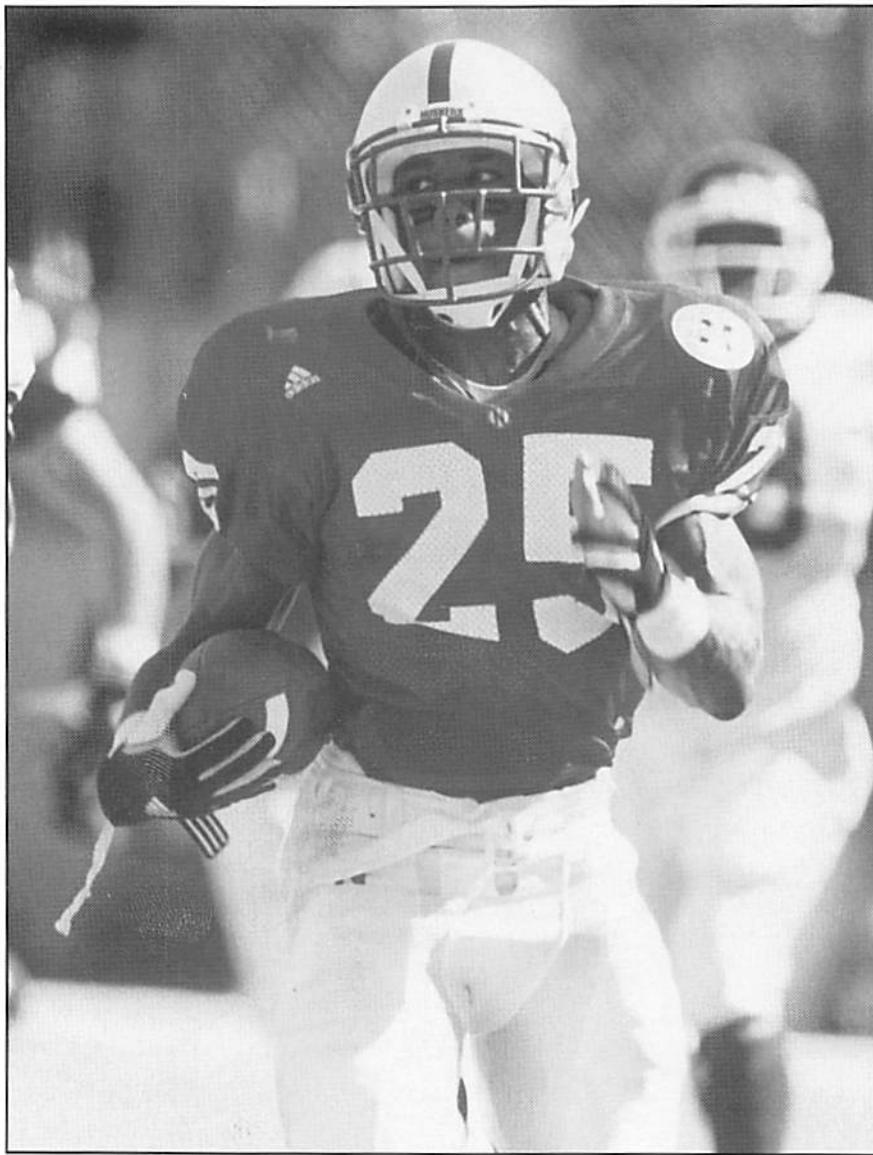
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Not Your Average JOE

Before Joe Walker's career at Nebraska is over, his name may be mentioned among the best returners in school history

And he's still early in his career.

"I don't think he's done," Solich said. "I think he'll have some more returns that may get in the end zone. I think he's got that kind of ability, and we surround him with guys on special teams who work very hard at getting their blocks, at getting on the right people. That gives a guy like Joe Walker a chance."

"And normally, all he needs is a chance to get something done that's very productive."

Consider the evidence. Five games into his second season at Nebraska, Walker had returned an interception, a kickoff and a punt for touchdowns. The interception return, a 73-yarder, came last season against Kansas State. And the kickoff return, a 99-yarder, came against Louisiana Tech this season.

"I think he's a tremendously talented guy," said Solich.

Walker, who ranked 17th in the nation and second in the Big 12 in kickoff returns last season (averaging 25.9 yards per return), also is tremendously fast, having run the 100 meters in 10.5 seconds and the 200 meters in 21.6 seconds while he was competing at Arlington (Lamar) High School.

"I'm not surprised that this is happening," Walker said of the punt return for a touchdown against Oklahoma State. "I figure if I've got the ability to do it, I can do it at any given time."

Obviously, he's got the ability, so "it's just a matter of time," he said.

"The more I'm on the field, the

Joe Walker was kept busy in Nebraska's 45-38 overtime victory against Missouri last season. He returned a school-record seven kickoffs for a record 185 yards.

He also intercepted a Corby Jones pass to stop a fourth-quarter drive.

His performance was understandably overshadowed by the game's drama. But that was all right because the sophomore from Arlington, Texas, was just getting started in a career with great promise.

"Joe's a tremendous athlete, a great return man," coach Frank Solich said recently. "I think he's a threat every time he touches the ball, either on a kickoff return or a punt return."

"And he's also continuing to come along as a defensive back."

Solich was speaking the week after

the Cornhuskers' 24-17 victory against Oklahoma State, in which Walker certainly made his presence felt, both good and bad.

The bad was that he gambled on a pass interception and got beat for Oklahoma State's tying touchdown. The good came soon after, when he returned a punt 73 yards for what proved to be the winning touchdown.

Naturally, the punt return "felt pretty great," Walker said at a news conference the next week.

Because of that punt return in particular — one of five for him in the game — Walker was chosen as the Big 12 Conference Specialty Player of the Week.

He also returned four kickoffs and made seven tackles as a rover back.

"He's played a lot of great football for us," Solich said.

more I'm going to produce."

Walker, who didn't enroll at Nebraska until January of 1997, was among six true freshmen who played for the Cornhuskers' national championship team last season. In addition to returning kicks, he became the No. 1 nickel back. And when free safety Clint Finley was sidelined by a knee injury early this season, he became the starter at rover, with junior Mike Brown moving from rover to free safety.

It wasn't as easy as Walker made it seem. He needed time to adjust.

"Coming out of high school, there are more plays you've got to learn, more plays you've got to focus on," he said. "You've got to get the technique down first before you can let your ability take control. I think that plays a big part in your learning experience and a big part in your production as well."

Returning kicks, however, was a different matter. He was almost immediately effective at that.

Punt returns are "probably a little tougher because you've got to focus on catching the ball," said the 5-foot-10, 200-pound Walker. "They kick the ball a little higher than on a kickoff.

"On a kickoff, the ball comes straight to you. On a punt return, the ball kind of shifts around when it's up in the air. You've got to keep your focus on the ball. So I think a punt is harder."

Once he catches the ball, the difficult part is pretty much over. There's no big secret to his success then. Walker just relies on Craig Bohl, the Cornhuskers' special teams coach.

"He usually gives us (the kick returners) a signal, which direction we're going to go, how the blocks are going to be set up," Walker said. "So when I catch the ball, I pretty much look for that first."

"If there's not an opening, then I just use my ability to take control."

Ordinarily, he's one of three players deep on punts.

"The only time I would go back by myself is either if it's a 'safe' punt or if it's close to our end zone, where they (the coaches) don't want too many people around the ball," he said.

"But other than that, we usually have three men back so they can get good blocks on the 'bullet man' running down the field. That gives the return man a chance to catch the ball."

And when Walker is that return man, there's a chance he might take the ball all the way back. ■

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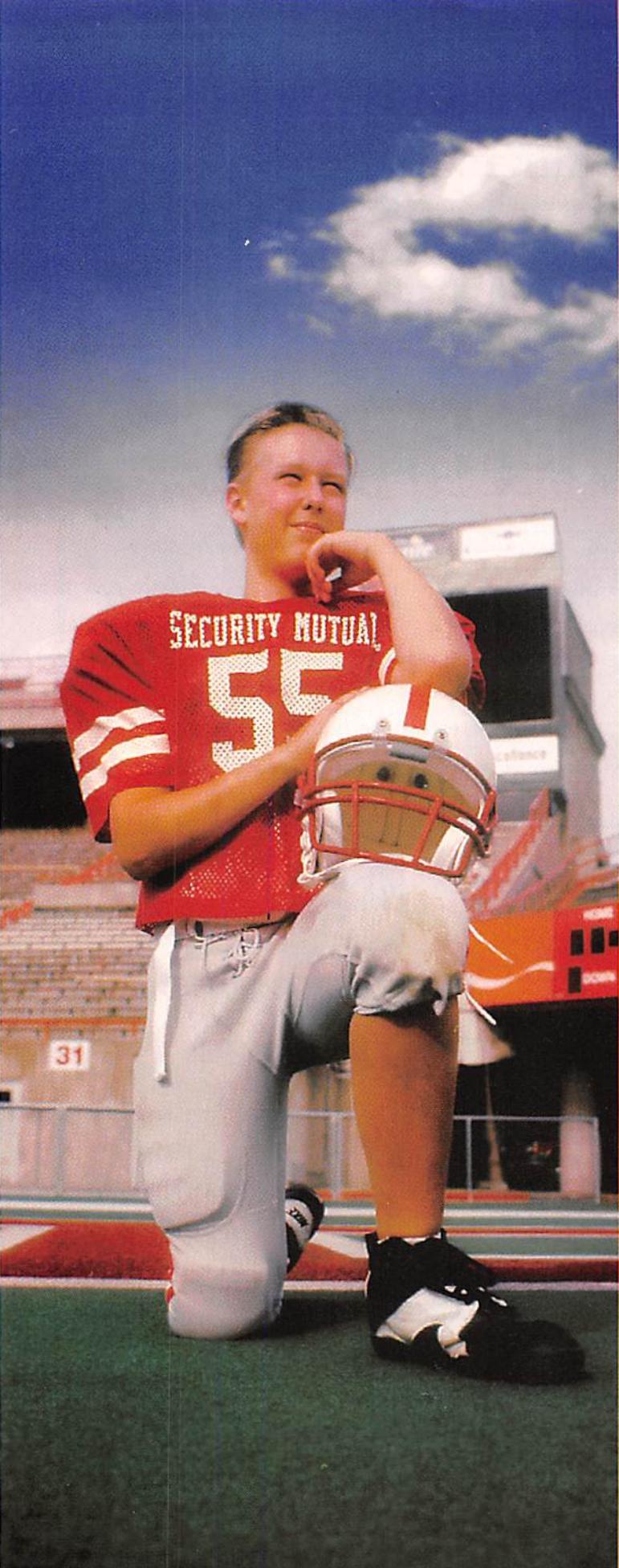
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Hero WORSHIP

Matt Davison's collegiate career, which is less than two years old, has been defined and enshrined by one reception

By Mike Babcock

It's a little like actors being typecast in particular roles or recording artists who become one-hit wonders. Remember "Ice, Ice Baby" by Vanilla Ice?

But you get the idea. A single role or song sometimes can define a performer.

Matt Davison has a unique insight into such a situation. The still-young career of Nebraska's sophomore wide receiver has been characterized by a single play, which shouldn't need to be recounted here. Any Cornhusker fan knows the play and the circumstances surrounding it.

The play isn't a one-hit wonder in the traditional sense, of course. It's not in jeopardy of being forgotten soon, or ever. And Davison's place in Nebraska football lore is assured because of it.

Even so, Davison would prefer that his career not be typecast by it.

"I said (at the time) I didn't want that to be a defining moment in my career," he said recently. "Hopefully, I can make a couple of more big receptions before I'm done."

None can ever be bigger than the reception in question, however. That one was good for 12 yards and a touchdown on the final play of regulation in Nebraska's 45-38 overtime victory at Missouri last season.

Scott Frost threw the pass, and Shevin

Wiggins deflected it — or kicked it, to be more precise.

If Davison had given up on the play instead of being prepared and in position to cradle the ball in the back of the end zone, the Cornhuskers couldn't have gone on to win a national championship.

The catch earned ESPN's Espy award as the college football play of the year. It brought to mind the "immaculate reception" by the Pittsburgh Steelers' Franco Harris against the Oakland Raiders. It was miraculous.

And a year later, it's still what fans immediately associate with Davison, who will celebrate his 20th birthday on Oct. 24, the day of this year's Missouri game. How's that for irony?

"It's brought up all the time," he said of the catch. "I doubt I'll ever be able to forget it because nobody will let me. I never go a week without hearing about it. 'You're the guy who caught the pass.'"

Nebraska football players are celebrities, and when "people find out you're a football player, they want to know your name," said Davison. "And then when they know your name . . ."

When the name is "Davison," anyway, they associate it with the catch at Missouri.

It's not that Davison dislikes all of the attention his first (and only, through the first five games this season) touchdown reception as a Cornhusker has earned him. He's modest. But hey, being recognized is nice. The problem with such attention is that his career is still in its formative stage.

Davison has two more seasons after this one. He hadn't even started a game at Nebraska until two weeks ago at Texas A&M. And that was because Kenny Cheatham was injured.

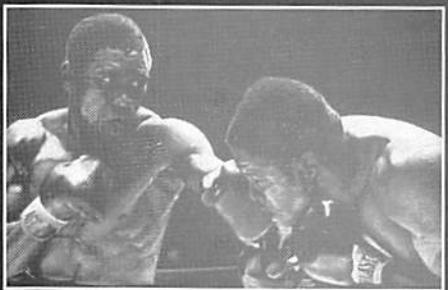
"I feel I'm prepared for the challenge," Davison said beforehand. "When it's time to step in and pick up the slack, you've got to do it.



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As far as starting, though, it doesn't mean too much.

"Just getting your name on the sheet doesn't mean too much to me."

That's especially true for Davison, who worked his way into the regular rotation at wide receiver as a true freshman. He was one of only six true freshmen who played last season.

Davison was realistic about his chances of playing right away. "I just wanted to give myself the best opportunity to play," he said. "I just wanted to get on the field before my career was over."

"I was a confident guy coming in. I think there's a lot of intimidation when you're a freshman. I wasn't cocky, and I didn't do a whole lot of talking. I tried to earn respect."

He had to earn it because he wasn't likely to command it by of his physical presence. He weighed in at 170 pounds last season. And he's not a whole lot heavier now.

"I fluctuate between 170 and 180," he said.

He bulked up to 185 last spring and "thought I was a big guy." But he underwent arthroscopic knee surgery following spring practice and lost all of the weight he had gained. "I want to play at about 190 while I'm here," he said. "I should be able to put on weight pretty easily."

That may be so. But for the time being, he could hardly be described as imposing.

"I'm a little skinny kid running around out there," Davison said.

"Sometimes, I think I'm a target because they (defenders) know they can take me out. I'm slow. I'm skinny. I'm not strong. I get teased about it all the time. Our own defense will ask me: 'How do you get open?' I guess I'm just a little bit smarter. I think my instincts have helped me a lot."

Davison developed those instincts and self-preservation techniques as a multi-sport athlete at Tecumseh, Neb., High School. He earned four letters each in football, basketball and track — he was a sprinter — as well as playing American Legion baseball during the summer.

He and Cornhusker cornerback Erwin Swiney, from Lincoln Northeast, were the all-class, all-state wide receivers in 1996, when Davison caught 63 passes for 1,314 yards and 20 touchdowns. He set state records for receiving yards (1,516) and touchdown receptions (26) as a junior.

Davison hasn't had to wait for the



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attention that comes with being a Cornhusker football player. He already knows the writer's cramp of signing innumerable autographs, for example.

"I couldn't count all the different things I've signed," he said.

The list includes not only hats, programs, T-shirts and pompons but also "people's skin." People's skin? "A woman wanted me to sign her son's arm after a home game," said Davison. "I don't know if he wasn't going to wash it off or what. There have been some weird things (to sign).

"But I figure if me writing my name makes someone happy . . ."

Despite the celebrity that followed the catch at Missouri, he has kept things in perspective. That's a function of his background. "Coming from a small town, everybody knows me as a person," he said. "Hopefully, they know me as a good person, a good Christian, and they have respect for me."

He has matured, of course. A season of playing for an undefeated national championship team will do that. "I'm 100 times more confident now than I was a year ago at this time," he said.

"I'm a smarter football player. I think that's probably gotten me where I am."

Where he was five games into this season was at the top of the list among Cornhusker pass receivers, with 12 catches — one more than he had all of his freshman season.

Statistics aren't that important, however, because "football isn't the most important thing in my life," Davison said. "I play it to have fun, to get an education and to win."

"I'll do anything to win. I hate to lose."

That will to win has served him well at Nebraska.

Not only has he played, he has written his name indelibly in the Cornhusker history books. Regardless of what else happens, he'll be remembered long after his career is over.

Recently, he was asked to reflect on his brief career. He talked about being confident and working hard. Then he paused and said, as if it had just occurred to him: "Geez, I guess I'm just lucky."

But, as someone once noted: Luck is the residue of design.

And Davison had a plan, even though it couldn't have included the catch. ■

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Megan Korver already owns two Newcomer of the Year awards, but if you listen closely to Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit, you might think the senior middle blocker from Norris High School is in line for a third.

Korver is off to the best start of her collegiate career, which began at George Washington University in 1995. This season, her third since transferring to Nebraska, Korver boasted an NCAA-best hitting percentage of .479 through the Huskers' first 13 matches — all wins. She's on pace to shatter a 10-year-old Nebraska hitting mark.

Fans at the NU Coliseum still recognize Korver as the same powerful presence at the net, but Pettit says his surprise All-America candidate is an all-new player in many ways.

"She's just a different ballplayer," Pettit has said time after time when asked to evaluate Korver's early season success. "Her play is a whole level above where she was last year."

That certainly wasn't bad, although Korver was disappointed to earn only honorable mention All-Big 12 status after the 1997 season. She was fourth in the league with a hitting percentage of .315 and second behind teammate Tonia Tauke with 1.47 blocks per game.

In 1996, her first season at Nebraska, Korver led the league in blocks and hit .307 to rank among the top 10. She made the All-Big 12 first team as Nebraska reached the Final Four for the second year in a row.

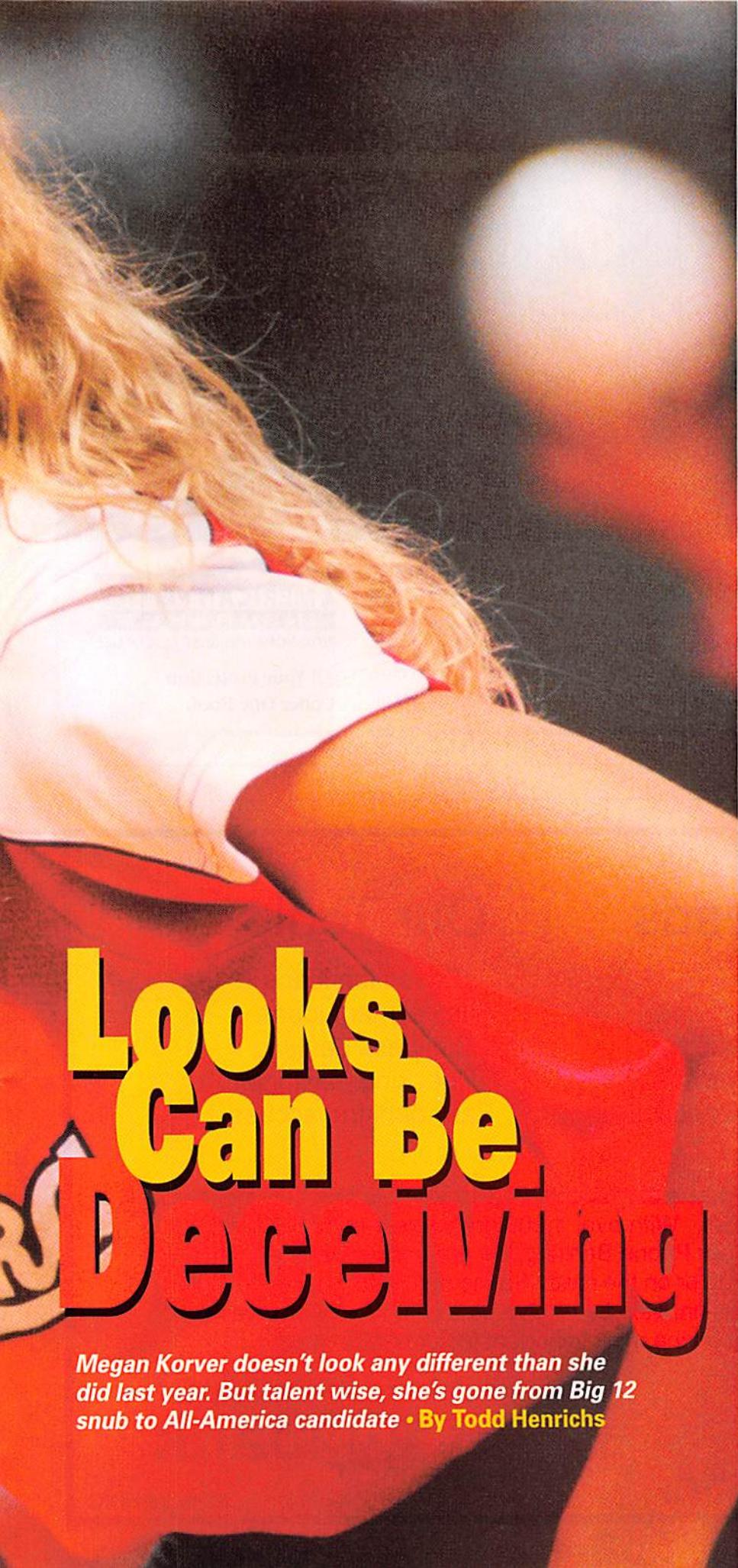
The year before, Nebraska won the national title after eliminating George Washington during NCAA Tournament play in Lincoln. Korver was playing for the Colonials that season, but left for home after listening to some advice from her father.

"(The thought) was already in me, but he just came out and said it," Korver recalled. "He said, 'You can do better than GW. You can play on the Nebraska team if you work hard.'"

Korver attributes a lot of her success to the encouragement of her father, Kelvin. A former NFL player with the Oakland Raiders, the elder Korver professes to know little about the finer points in volleyball but a lot about the motivation necessary to succeed.



University of Nebraska
This season, Korver became only the 11th player in NCAA Division I-A history to hit 1.000 in a match with 10 kills on 10 attacks against Iowa State.



Looks Can Be Deceiving

Megan Korver doesn't look any different than she did last year. But talent wise, she's gone from Big 12 snub to All-America candidate • By Todd Henrichs

"He sees a lot of himself in me," Megan said. "He's gone through everything that I've gone through."

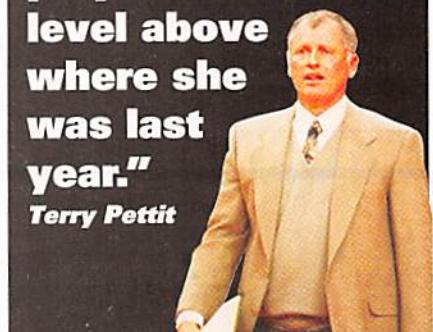
"Whenever I'm having a tough time or a bad game or a bad practice, he's the first one I call. He pushes me like nobody else does."

Alongside fellow seniors Fiona Nepo and Jaime Krondak, the 6-foot-1 Korver could push Nebraska to another national title. Even before the mid-point of the season, the Huskers were one of just three unbeatens remaining in NCAA Division I-A and owned wins over five teams ranked in the Top 20.

Pettit says much of the credit for NU's best start since 1994 goes to his seniors, whose great play often translates into great things for the program.

"She's just a different ballplayer. Her play is a whole level above where she was last year."

Terry Pettit

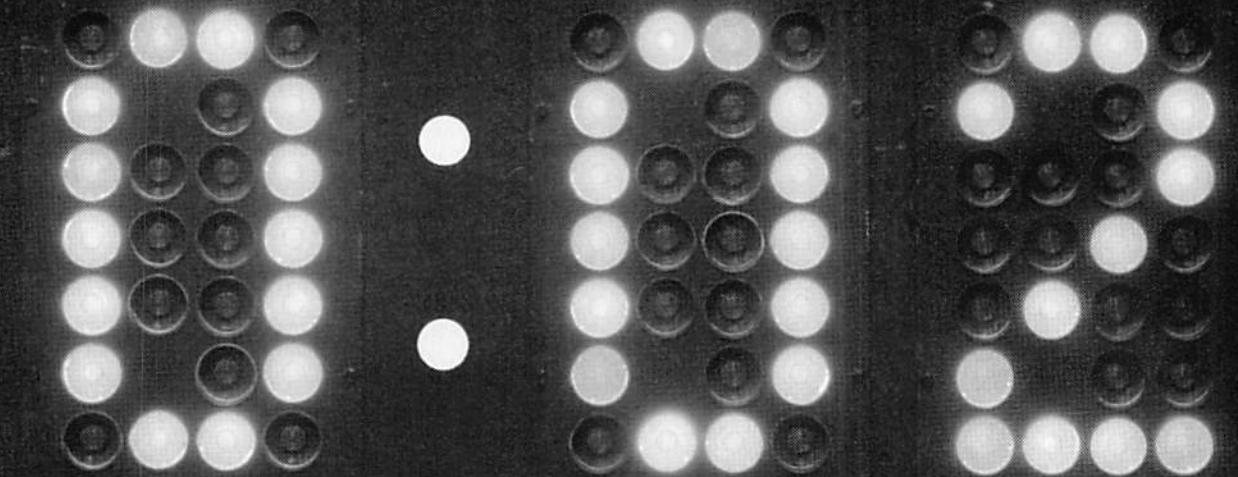


"We take pride in the fact that our seniors play our best volleyball. They don't peak as sophomores," said Pettit, whose 1995 championship team was also led by three seniors. "If you can stay healthy and continue to develop here, you're usually an All-American by the time you're a senior. That's what has happened to Korver."

In offseason club play, Korver was teamed with Katherine Pettit, Terry's daughter, while attending high school near Lincoln. She chose a scholarship from George Washington over the prospect of walking at Nebraska.

With her transfer, she became the first Husker to ever have played at another four-year institution. She was immediately called upon to fill the shoes of All-America candidate Jen McFadden, who was forced to give up the sport only 16 days before the start of fall camp due to a chronic lower back injury.

Strangely, it was at about that time



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this summer when Korver found out she had contracted mononucleosis. The illness, while a shock then, could be the best thing to happen to her this season. It forced Korver to slow down a little after a harried summer in which she trained two times a day and took a heavy load of classes to make up for hours that did not transfer from George Washington.

"I only practiced once a day instead of going through two-a-days the first week and a half," Korver said.

But since the season started, there's been no stopping her. Korver became just the 11th player in Division I histo-

ry to hit 1.000 in a match when she dropped 10 kills on 10 attacks against Iowa State. She's also playing in the back row for the first time in her career and ranked second behind teammate Angie Oxley with 67 digs at midseason.

"Megan's playing great volleyball," Pettit said. "She's probably very close to being the best passer we have on the team. She's doing a great job in digs, and she's among the top 10 blockers in the country."

At the net, Pettit says Korver is showing better vision than in past years and is better equipped to handle

balls out of system, a coach's term for plays in which an off-the-mark pass or misplaced set can make things more difficult for a hitter.

As a result, Korver has but 23 errors in 213 attacks, the two components which along with kills are used to determine a player's hitting percentage.

Korver, however, says she doesn't feel much different than last season. The only change is a sense of urgency that comes with being a senior.

"I don't feel like I've changed my game at all," Korver said. "I feel like I've just grown up as a player." ■

Lindsay Eddleman Returns With Game-Winning Score

PLAYING CATCH-UP

Watching Nebraska's season opener from the sideline ate at the heart of Lindsay Eddleman. The junior from Lakewood, Colo., bills herself as a physical presence on the soccer field. The only place to be is the middle of things.

"It was a huge relief to be back," said Eddleman, who has scored three goals since returning to the lineup Sept. 11. "The whole time I was out, I sat and worried about what I would lose in terms of skill and speed."

Eddleman was injured this summer while playing for the Denver Diamonds, a semi-pro team. She underwent surgery to insert a screw in her foot in late July but was practicing barely a month later.

Although Eddleman had to play catch-up from a month of physical inactivity, Nebraska coach John Walker said Eddleman still has the mental makeup that is important to the team.

"She brings a physical component to us that's important," Walker said. "She's a junior, one of the elder players on the team now, she's a proven scorer and she's played in a lot of big games for us.

"She usually does well in big games, too."

Eddleman scored the game-winning goal in Nebraska's 2-1 victory over Texas on Oct. 4. The game

was played in a thunderstorm, weather appropriate for Eddleman's rough-and-tumble style.

"I like to be known as the one the other teams like to get," she said. "It's a big adrenaline rush each game."

With its six-game winning streak, the 8-2 Huskers climbed to No. 13 in the NSCAA/Umbro coaches' poll.

SANDERFORD ADDS TWO

Starting next year, the Nebraska women's basketball team will have a second home in Kansas City.

Shahidrah Roberts and Keasha Cannon, a pair of all-staters from the Kansas City area, are the first known members of the Huskers' 1999-2000 recruiting class. Each gave their non-binding oral commitment to coach Paul Sanderford this fall.

"(Nebraska) is just a very comfortable place," said Roberts, who turned down Southwest Missouri State, Arizona State and Missouri. "I liked the team. I liked the coaching staff — just everything about the program. It just felt right."

Roberts, a 5-foot-9 guard,



is a senior at Blue Valley North High School in Kansas City, Kan. She averaged 18 points, four assists, four steals and five rebounds for last year's state championship team.

Cannon, a 5-10 guard, hails from Kansas City's Washington High. The two were teammates on a summer all-star team.

FROSH GOLFERS SHINE

The Nebraska women's golf team, with three freshmen in its lineup, finished second to New Mexico at the Chip-N Club Invitational last month.

Nebraska was led by Amanda Sutcliffe, a New South Wales native who played what she called her "best golf ever." Sutcliffe fired a 54-hole total of 216 and finished tied for second. Her score broke the school

Eddleman helped propel Nebraska to an 8-2 record and a No. 13 national ranking in the coaches' poll.

record of 217 set by Heidi Wall in 1995.

Sarah Sasse, a freshman from Lincoln, fired a second-round 69 to break another Husker record. She finished at 224, along with junior teammate Elizabeth Bahensky of Kearney.

"Our team is so competitive this year that none of us are guaranteed a starting spot," Sasse said. "As a team we played solid, but there is always room for improvement. I guarantee none of the records we set today, or any past records, will be left standing at the end of the season."

Nebraska was the highest-finishing Big 12 team in the tournament. ■

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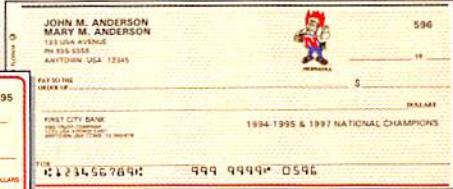
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Missouri On The Prowl

RUMORS

The Missouri Tigers earned their fourth commitment for the 1999 recruiting class in offensive lineman **Brock Tettleton** (6-foot-6, 310 pounds, with 5.0 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Herculaneum, Mo. Tettleton can play on both sides of the ball, but likes offense better and projects out at offensive tackle for the Tigers.

The Tigers are also very close to earning a commitment from All-American offensive lineman **Rob Droege** (6-7, 265, 5.0) of St. Louis (Lindbergh). Droege has over 40 scholarship offers to pick from, and has the Tigers way out in front of Notre Dame, Ohio State, Kansas State, Kansas, Illinois and Nebraska.

Offensive linemen **Shane Lehmann** (6-6, 270, 5.2) of Corona, Calif., and **Nick Johnson** (6-8, 310, 5.3) of Cottonwood (Mingus), Ariz., have the Cornhuskers among their top three choices. Both are preseason All-Americans, and Lehmann likes UCLA over the Cornhuskers and Notre Dame, while Johnson has the Cornhuskers locked in a battle with Arizona State and Ohio State.

Another outside linebacker the Cornhuskers have managed to get an interest from is **Nick Nattiel** (6-2, 210, 4.65) of Newberry, Fla. Nattiel is a relative of former Florida great Ricky Nattiel and plays with similar ability. Nebraska is still running second to Florida, but Nick promises that he will visit both schools.

It looks more and more that quarterback **C.J. Leak** (6-2, 210, 4.5) of Charlotte (Independence), N.C., will visit Nebraska. Leak is a gifted run/pass quarterback who lists Nebraska first among a group that includes Florida State, Tennessee, North Carolina and Clemson.

Latrez Harrison (6-2, 207, 4.5) of Atlanta (Washington) is another All-American signal-caller looking to Lincoln. Harrison recently listed the Huskers, Georgia Tech, OU, Georgia, Syracuse and Auburn as his top choices. Harrison is a gifted thrower who admits he might be a free safety at the next level.

Running back **Reggie Duncan** (5-9, 210, 4.4) of Killeen (Ellison), Texas, is having a super year. Through five games, Duncan is close to 1,000 yards rushing and lists Nebraska, OU, Texas, Texas A&M and Notre Dame as his top five schools.

Also, drop offensive tackle **Alfio Randle** of Houston (Yates) off the Texas commitment list. Randle now says he will take several visits before announcing who he will play for. The Longhorns still have 15 early commitments to their credit. ■

Outside Linebackers Built For Speed

Speed, strength and size are the main ingredients for recruits hoping to play outside linebacker at Nebraska

By James HALE

Nebaska continues to be one of the top football programs in the country, both on the field and in recruiting. Recently, the Huskers earned their tenth verbal commitment of the year when defensive end **Spencer Owen** (6-foot-5, 235 pounds with 4.79 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Carrollton, Mo., accepted the Cornhuskers' bid to play at the University of Nebraska.

Owen is a sleeper to some and an All-American to others. He attended the Huskers' football camp before his junior year, so once again, the Cornhusker coaches knew all they needed to know about him. They trust their own evaluation of an athlete and don't go on what is said in any other recruiting source.

Owen is an athlete who is still growing. He put on 12 pounds over the summer and grew another couple of inches. An athlete with incredible quickness, Owen is too tough to be handled by just one blocker.

"Every team that we face throws some kind of double team at us," said Carrollton head coach Stan Key. "We have seen every type of double team imaginable. Owen is a smart player who keeps his composure during a game and he never gets frustrated. He's so quick off the ball that he gets into the blocker before he has a chance to get out of his stance. It's really unbelievable how quick he really is for his size.

"Spencer is one of the best pass rushers that I have ever seen, and he is very good coming off the corner."

A year ago, Owen sacked the opposing quarterback 21 times in 13 games. This season, he is on a pace that will better that mark, as Owen has registered 14 sacks through five games. Owen will sign with Nebraska to play rush end, and he loves the tra-

dition — and the challenge — that comes with playing that position.

"Nebraska's tradition and coaching staff is what sold me on them," said Owen. "Charlie McBride recruited me, and he's a great guy, a straight shooter who never fed me any bull, in my opinion. I really respect him.

"I feel I will really fit in at Nebraska, but you have to understand that I am going against the grain somewhat in my family. Both my parents are Missouri graduates, my brother goes to Missouri and so does my girlfriend. However, I just don't see myself as a Tiger.

"Nebraska is the school for me, and they want me to play rush end. That in itself sold me right there. To try to follow in the footsteps of Grant Wistrom and the other great athletes that have been rush ends at Nebraska is quite an honor."

Owen chose the Cornhuskers over Missouri, Kansas State, Colorado and



LSU's Kevin Faulk (above) is one of the nation's top tailbacks, and his cousin, Treverance, is one of the most highly recruited players in the nation.

Kansas.

It takes a special breed of athlete to play outside linebacker at Nebraska. Many times the Cornhuskers take big defensive backs and mold them into outside linebackers. The recruiting trend lately has called for quick, fast and strong outside linebackers who have already been developed on the high school level. Many teams in both the college and prep game have gone to a pressure defense style of play, so the transition is not as difficult for some players as it once was.

Nebraska already has a verbal commitment from one of the top outside linebacker types in the country in **Shaun Coleman** (6-4, 212, 4.5) of Aurora (Regis Jesuit), Colo. He is the exact type of athlete the Cornhuskers are looking for in their outside linebackers.

Coleman, who is an option quarterback in high school, has great size and speed. He plays football with the type of passion that is necessary to be a part of the Cornhuskers' vaunted Blackshirt defense.

Treverance Faulk (6-3, 215, 4.6) of Lafayette, La., is another talented athlete who is being recruited as a running back and outside linebacker. A cousin of superstar LSU tailback Kevin Faulk, Treverance has been a dominant linebacker since his sophomore year. He moved over to running back this season and looks very good carrying a ball under his arm.

However, last year Faulk tracked down ball carriers 105 times and blitzed the quarterback for seven sacks, leaving no doubt that defense is where he will play at the next level.

"I enjoy playing running back, but I have been playing linebacker for so long, I can't see me playing anywhere else in college," Faulk says. "I love hitting people, and as outside linebacker I can have a big impact on the game."

Faulk went to the Texas A&M camp and favors the Aggies early on, but Nebraska has moved into second, with LSU, Kentucky, OU, Notre Dame and Ohio State all in the picture.

"I am pretty wide open right now with my recruiting," said Faulk. "I know more about Texas A&M and LSU than any other schools. I want to check out everybody else, including Nebraska to see what they are all about."

Twins **Jerrell** (6-3, 200, 4.5) and **Jermell Weaver** (6-2, 190,

REP REPORT

Keeping Up With COLBY FREEMAN

WE PLAYED EVERMAN this past Friday and won, 42-14. It was a pretty good game. I only played half the game. I didn't get to play the whole night, but that was good for our team as a bunch of second team guys got in and some experience. It was one of those games that you play in where you keep scoring and keep scoring. In the second half, I came in for one series and we had already scored 14 points because our defense scored seven. It was one of those games that you could sit back and enjoy.

I had 130 yards rushing and 120 yards passing in the game. We knew going in that we were a better team. We were cautious not to overlook them, but we thought in the back of our mind we were a better team. You could look at some scores from previous games and see that they had been beaten pretty bad in some earlier games. In the back of your mind, you are always thinking that it's a game you should win pretty big, but at the same time you don't want to overlook anything.

We got our first win of the season and were so up for that game, then had a downer in the second game. Now we are back on an upslope and we are playing our district rival this week in Stephenville. It's a huge rivalry between our two communities. The community makes the game out to be a lot bigger than the kids do. It's unbelievable. I think we have jelled together as a team and feel we are right where we want to be going into this game. They are ranked No. 4 in the state, and we are No. 7.

It's certainly a big game, but something that we understand that maybe the townfolk don't is that whether this game is won or lost on Friday, we are still coming back on Monday and putting the pads back on and going back to work. My dad says we are not going to put all our eggs in this one basket. We are going to save some for later on. Whatever the outcome is, I think we have a good attitude and good mindset that even though this is a good game, we will be in a lot bigger games down the road.

Stephenville has a great quarterback in Kelan Luker. What they have this year is a go-to receiver in Cody Caldwell. They find ways to get the ball to him, and we have to definitely find ways to keep an eye on him. Every Saturday morning when you open up the paper, you will see that Caldwell had another great game. I know that he takes short passes and goes 90 yards. He's a great athlete after he catches the ball.

If we have bad weather I think I can play pretty well in the rain and mud. Stephenville is a passing team and we are a rushing team, so I think if we have bad weather it would be to our advantage.

I didn't take any recruiting visits to any games this weekend and I haven't talked to any recruiters. I really haven't done much in recruiting lately. Recruiting is still going the same for me. I have slowed it down a lot and really haven't done much with it. ■ — **As told to James Hale**

Throughout the 1998 football season, *Huskers Illustrated* will chronicle the recruiting process of Brownwood quarterback Colby Freeman, one of the top prospects in Texas.

4.5) of Miami (Northwest) are two of the most interesting recruiting stories in the country this season. Both are outstanding outside linebacker types

who play a stand-up defensive end position in high school.

Both are outstanding at rushing the passer and are a big reason why Northwestern is ranked ninth in the country in the latest *USA Today* poll.

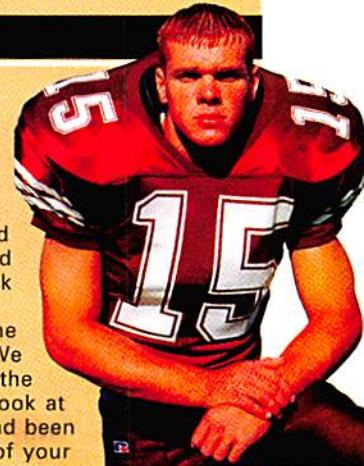
Through the team's perfect 4-0 start, **Jerrell** has posted 8 1/2 sacks, two fumble recoveries, one forced fumble that he returned 27 yards for a touchdown, and he's also intercepted one pass.

Jermell has 11 sacks, two forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries thus far. As far as which brother is better, it

Early Birds

These players have given Nebraska verbal non-binding commitments.

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	High School
Josh Davis	TB	6-0	194	4.4	Loveland, Colo.
Ryon Bingham	DT	6-4	260	5.0	Sandy (Alta), Utah
Rob Blomeier	QB/DB	6-0	194	4.5	Lancaster (Manheim Township), Pa.
Judd Davies	FB	6-1	238	4.7	Omaha (Millard North), Neb.
Taylor Gehman	FS	6-0	190	4.5	Omaha (Northwest), Neb.
Chris Loos	OL	6-3	275	5.4	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.
Phil Peetz	DT	6-2	250	4.9	Elkhorn, Neb.
Trevor Johnson	TE	6-4	220	4.7	Lincoln (Northeast), Neb.
Shaun Coleman	LB/QB	6-4	212	4.5	Aurora (Regis Jesuit), Colo.
Spencer Owen	DL	6-6	235	4.8	Carrollton, Mo.



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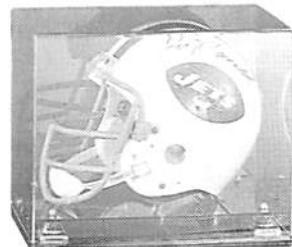
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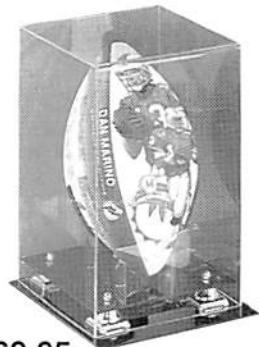
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As Seen Through The Eyes Of Sheldon Jackson

IN PAST SEASONS, Sheldon Jackson attracted attention by just being himself.

You noticed the Nebraska senior tight end's funky goatee, necklaces and earrings. This season, however, more than at any time during his career, Jackson is being noticed for his playing ability.

Brown said Jackson is attracting opponents' attention, a development that could help keep defenses from putting eight and nine players near the line of scrimmage.

"I love to see what's happening to him," Nebraska receivers coach Ron Brown said. "I can definitely use him as a highlight tape for future tight ends and receivers."

The Sheldon Jackson reel, Brown said, would have to include a part showing Jackson dripping with sweat as he toiled in Nebraska's summer conditioning program. It would also need to show him catching passes after practice in the fall as darkness fell and his teammates were long gone.

And any Sheldon Jackson highlight video would have to include the Oct. 3 game against Oklahoma State, when the 6-foot-4, 245-pounder made two third-quarter catches that led to Nebraska's only offensive touchdowns in a 24-17 victory.

"I'm fortunate, truly blessed, that my number was called on those plays," Jackson said. "I'm thankful the coaches had the confidence to send me down the middle of the field."

Last season the Diamond Bar, Calif., native alternated with seniors Tim Carpenter and Vershan Jackson and caught 11 passes for 189 yards. His best game came in the Orange Bowl against Tennessee, when he had four catches for 56 yards.

About midway through last season, Jackson began to realize he could be a difference-maker.

"There comes a point when you say, 'That's enough,' and you get fed up with not being in the game, with not starting, with taking a back seat to everybody else," Jackson said. "You just put your foot down and get after it. You just tell yourself, 'Look, I'm a lot better than what I'm playing and I can contribute to this team, so why not do it?'"

Jackson's penchant for catching passes long after practice ends reminds Brown of former Nebraska star tight end Johnny Mitchell. Asked if he ever tires of the extra practice sessions, Jackson said, "No man, I don't have anything else to do. I have no friends."

Just Sheldon being Sheldon.

"OK, I have a few friends, and a lot of acquaintances," he said. "For the most part, I just like catching balls. That's what I do. That's all I want to do right now." ■

— As told to Steve Sipple



Sheldon JACKSON

depends on who you talk to, but it doesn't matter anyway because if you want one, you have to sign both.

"We want to play together. There is no question about that," said Jerrell. "I think that the reason we are so good is because we both can compete at the same high level against each other. We compete at everything. I don't want him to get the best of me and he doesn't want me to get the best of him. It's a great situation for both of us."

The Weavers have already set a visit with Kansas State on Dec. 17. They are also considering Miami, Ohio State, Syracuse, Florida State, Nebraska and Oklahoma for visits.

Jason Frederick (6-0, 205, 4.5) of Houston (Cy-Falls) is the best outside linebacker prospect in Texas. Some like Frederick better as a strong safety, but most feel he can put on some weight and still keep his 4.5 sprinter's speed. A year ago, Frederick recorded 74 solo tackles and six sacks.

Frederick is leaning toward staying in Texas, either with the Longhorns or Aggies, but says if Nebraska will get a little more aggressive, he would be interested in them. Florida State, Kansas State and LSU certainly are picking up the pace.

Corey Redding (6-5, 235, 4.6) of Galena Park (North Shore), Texas, certainly challenges Frederick for the title of best outside linebacker prospect in Texas. In fact, many feel Redding is the top player in Texas.

As a junior, Redding posted 117 tackles with four interceptions, three of which he returned for touchdowns. Corey's brother, Chris, signed with Arizona last year and his parents would love to see Corey follow suit. However, Corey is not ready to make that commitment, and is looking at Nebraska, Texas, Colorado and Michigan.

Sean Doyle (6-1, 225, 4.65) of Kansas City (Rockhurst) plays for a great program that is currently ranked number two in Missouri. Doyle is both an outside linebacker and fullback, and is on pace to match his total of 108 tackles a year ago. He's wide open in recruiting, with Nebraska, Tennessee, Notre Dame, Boston College, Iowa, Kansas State, Missouri, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State in the picture.

"If I have a favorite, it is Nebraska," said Doyle. "They are a great school with one of the best football teams in the country. They have a great program with a solid coaching staff that always seem very nice." ■

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National Title Goals Are Still Intact

The convincing win over Kansas was the first step in this team's willingness to pick itself up, forget the past and move forward to Tempe



Mike Babcock

IF A TEAM with aspirations of playing for a national championship loses, the loss had best be early in the season. A loss in the sixth game is probably early enough.

That's Nebraska's hope, anyway.

"Our goals are still attainable," Cornhusker middle linebacker and co-captain Jay Foreman said during a news conference on the Tuesday after Nebraska's 28-21 loss at Texas A&M.

"If people think we're out of it, they don't know Nebraska very well."

Lose confidence? "Actually, we haven't at all," he said.

Concerns that the Cornhuskers might have lost confidence were assuaged by a 41-0 victory against Kansas. Nebraska showed it could handle a defeat, even though it hadn't experienced one since early December of 1996, when it lost to Texas in the first Big 12 championship game, 37-27.

Despite the loss to Texas A&M, Nebraska's goals remain intact. "They're still there," said rush end and co-captain Chad Kelsay. "You've got to realize that you can't let your head hang and feel sorry for yourself. Now that we've got one loss, we've really got to fight for the goals we've set."

The Cornhuskers responded with a week of spirited practices leading up to the Kansas game.

"I'd say there's a lot more fire in people," sophomore quarterback Bobby Newcombe said.

"You see where people's hearts are at, especially when you're down. Some of our leaders are starting to get a lot more vocal. Voices are starting to raise, not because people are mad at each other. It's more because we're trying to motivate each other to keep on fighting, and don't give up."

The situation now parallels the one Nebraska faced in 1996 after it lost at Arizona State, 19-0, in the second game of the season — ending a school-record 26-game winning streak.

The Texas A&M loss snapped a 19-game winning streak.

"I think in some ways (it's) similar," coach Frank Solich said at the Tuesday news conference. "As I look back at that team, they came back to work the following week and really, I think, picked things up practice-wise. This team (is)

smart enough to understand what it takes to get back where they want to.

"And they'll do everything they can to get to that point again."

The Cornhuskers dropped from No. 1 to No. 8 in the Associated Press poll following the Arizona State loss in 1996. But they worked their way back up to No. 3 going into the Big 12 playoff against Texas. And had they not lost, they would have played in the Sugar Bowl for the national championship.

Nebraska also dropped to No. 8 in both major polls after the Texas A&M game, giving the Cornhuskers ample opportunity to work their way back up in the rankings by season's end.

Scott Bruhn

They were sixth in an unofficial determination of the Bowl Championship Series rankings, which won't be calculated officially and released for the first time until mid-November.

It won't be easy. But it won't be impossible, either.

"Just one loss isn't going to make us throw the season away, by any means," said sophomore split end Matt Davison. "We don't feel that a national championship is out of the picture."

"We feel there's a lot to play for still."

Even though the Kansas State game is a key to any national championship hopes Nebraska might have still, the Cornhuskers can't afford to ignore Missouri, Texas or even Iowa State — their next three opponents — nor can they disregard their final regular-season game against Colorado.

Colorado's victories haven't been aesthetically pleasing, but it has six of them in its last seven games.

If Nebraska were to win out, it might well earn a rematch with Texas A&M in the Big 12 playoff in St. Louis on Dec. 5. "Hopefully, they (the Aggies) can win their games and we can win ours and then meet them in the Big 12 championship game," said senior center Josh Heskew.

"That would be a good thing to do."

And the Cornhuskers could do it.

The loss at Texas A&M hasn't knocked them out of the national title picture. It has just made Nebraska's task a little more difficult. There's no margin for error.

But then, there wouldn't have been anyway because it's too late in the season now. ■



Bobby Newcombe and his Cornhusker teammates know that if they keep winning, they can still realize their goal of playing for another national championship.

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